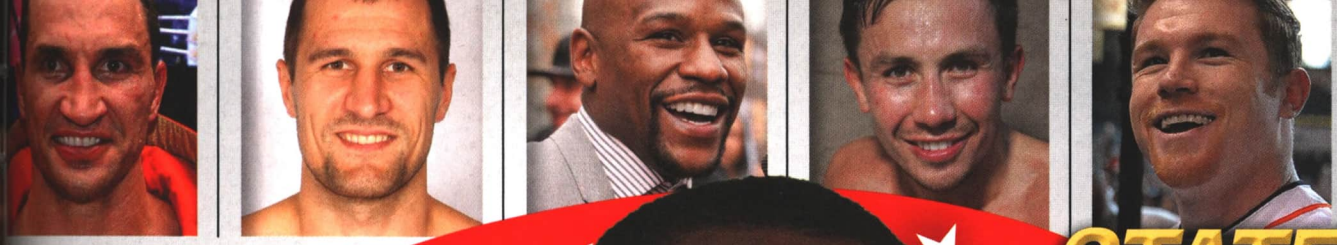

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"I WANT PEOPLE TO SAY, ERENCE CRAWFORD FOUGHT THE BEST OUT THERE. E FOUGHT EVERYONE WHO WANTED TO FIGHT HIM.'"

STATE OF THE GAME

FEATURING (ABOVE L-R)
WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO
SERGEY KOVALEV
FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.
GENNADY GOLOVKIN
CANELO ALVAREZ
AND MORE
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DOMINATING

TERENCE CRAWFORD

DESTROYING THE COMPETITION P. 36

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HALL OF FAME

RIDDICK BOWE, NASEEM HAMED, RAY MANCINI ARE ENSHRINED
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Canelo Alvarez was prepared for anything as he made his way to the ring to face James Kirkland.

The RING
SEPTEMBER 2015

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NAOKI FUKUDA

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VIDEO: COTTO
SAYS HE'S READY TO FIGHT CANELO ALVAREZ
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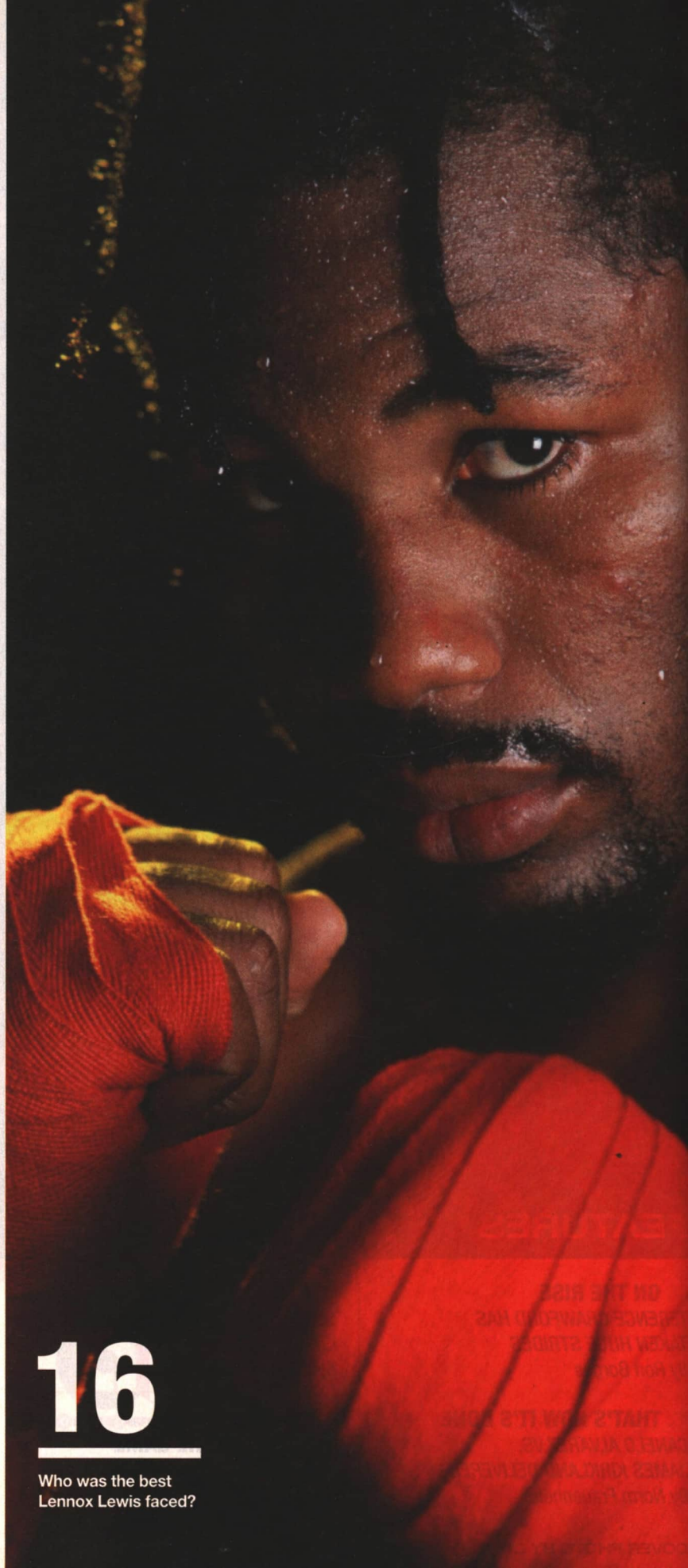

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Who was the best Lennox Lewis faced?

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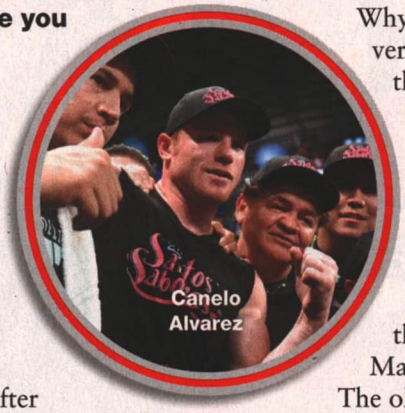
ALVAREZ VS. COTTO: THE FANS' FIGHT

I hope by the time you read this a fight between Canelo Alvarez and Miguel Cotto is a done deal for this fall.



Alvarez and James Kirkland gave boxing fans the kind of entertainment they crave only a week after Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Manny Pacquiao failed miserably to live up to unprecedented hype on May 2.

Alvarez endured a typically wild attack from Kirkland and put him down three times, the last time for good in Round 3, in a brief war that reminded some of the Marvin Hagler-Thomas Hearns classic.

A month later, the remarkable resurrection of Cotto continued. The future Hall of Famer's career seemed to be nearing an end in 2012, when he suffered back-to-back losses to Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Austin Trout, but a union with trainer Freddie Roach gave him new life.

Cotto is 3-0 – with three knockouts – since the second setback, including a brutal fourth-round KO of Daniel Geale to retain his RING and WBC middleweight titles on June 6.

Of course, a rematch between Mayweather and Pacquiao ... (sigh) ... almost certainly would do better numbers than any other matchup because of carryover hype if nothing else. Alvarez-Cotto very clearly is the next-biggest pairing, though, one that could approach 2 million pay-per-view buys.

Why? The timing is very good, given that both fighters are coming off impressive victories. Fans know the fight itself would be more entertaining than any Mayweather fight. The old vs. young element is intriguing. And there's the Mexico vs. Puerto Rico thing, which can't be underestimated. The boxing rivalry between those countries is very real and very compelling.

Alvarez vs. Cotto. No oversaturation in the media like Mayweather-Pacquiao. No zillion-dollar seats. No Mayweather arrogance. No games (perceived or real) with press credentials. And, most important, no betting favorite content to win an uneventful decision with his defensive wizardry.

Alvarez-Cotto isn't the crossover fight that Mayweather-Pacquiao was but it's the fans' fight, the feel-good fight, the best the sport has to offer.

Now Gennady Golovkin might not back me here. Triple-G, forever in search of a big fight, would love to take on either Cotto or Alvarez for obvious reasons. That could come next or soon, although probably at a catchweight between 154 and 160 pounds because of GGG's size.

No, this is the moment for Alvarez vs. Cotto. Let's hope nothing stands in the way of it happening.

The RING

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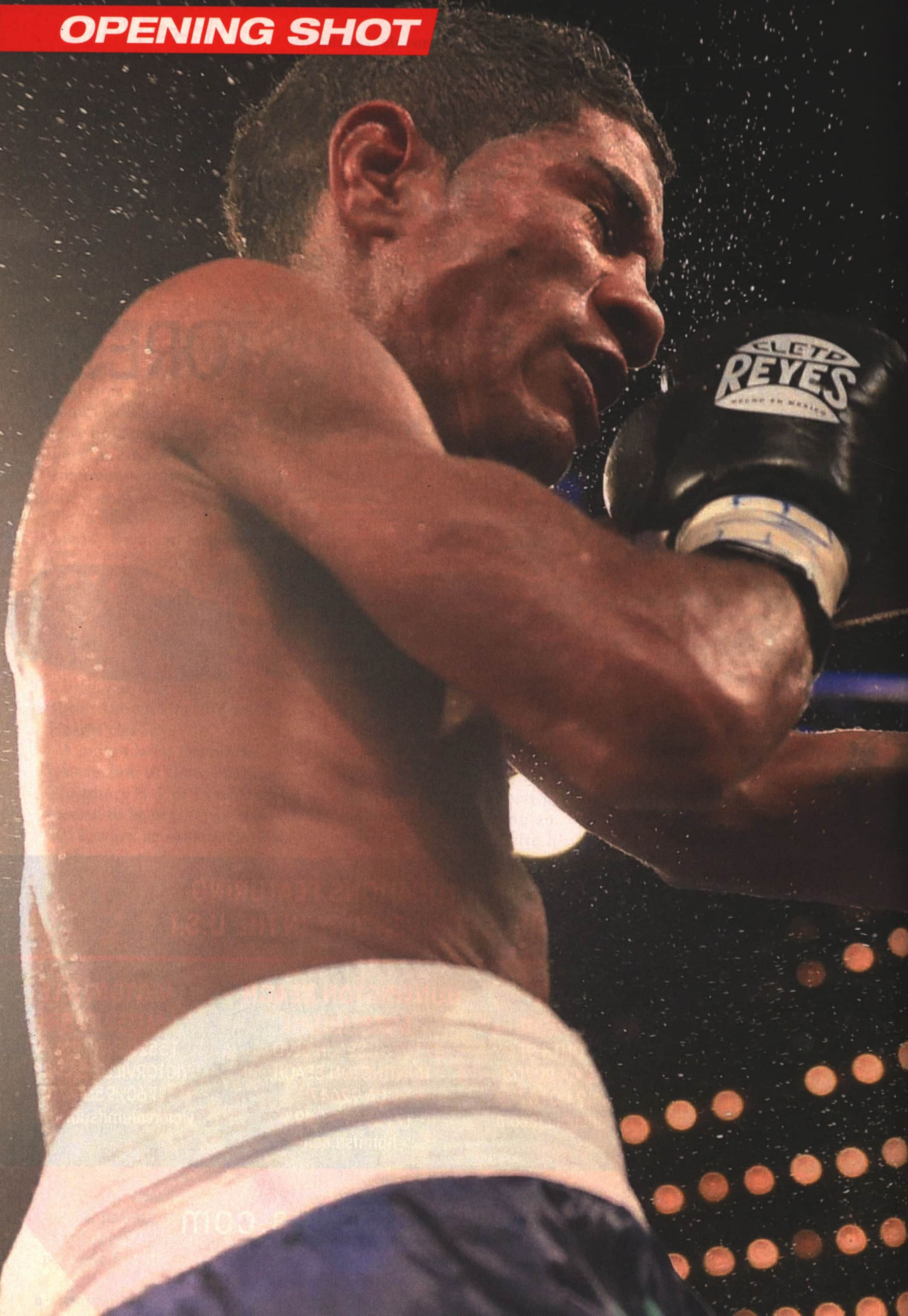
REYES

Nicholas Walters (right) was too strong and too good for Miguel Marriaga but the Jamaican lost his title on the scales.

COME OUT WRITING

DILUTED STATUS

Miguel Cotto is diluting his status as middleweight champion, as well as his claim to being Puerto Rico's first four-division champion. He is doing this by his insistence on defending his WBC middleweight belt at a catchweight arbitrarily decided by him. Catchweights have their place in boxing, to bridge gaps between fighters of different sizes (i.e. Cotto vs. Manny Pacquiao) in order to make fights the public wants to see happen. They're not intended to carve out an entirely new division in order to give one fighter a constant unfair advantage. Unlike most of the rest of the boxing public, I believe the proliferation of alphabet titles is good for boxing: More titles mean more championship fights, which translates into heightened interest and thus more revenue. It's time for the WBC to step forward, prove that their title is not a meaningless collection of letters and explain to Cotto that being middleweight champ means fighting at 160 and not an ounce less.

Miguel Cotto

Brad Morris
Astoria, New York

OLD-TIMERS BETTER?

Your article "The Greatest Modern Middleweight?" (July 2015) was a pure pleasure. I agree with many of your assessments. I was very pleased to see recognition of Olympic gold medalist Nino Benvenuti but I wanted to mention others not included in the article. I believe Emile Griffith is one the most underappreciated all-time greats. Dick Tiger beat Benvenuti but Griffith took Tiger's title. Joey Giardello, another underappreciated middleweight champion, won 100 fights. Cuban Luis Rodriguez fought 121 times against the best. Bernard Hopkins has a Ph.D. in the boxing game. I would like to ask Dr. BHop how many of today's boxers have the old-school work ethic, knowledge, hunger and professionalism of the above-mentioned champs who didn't make the "Greatest" list. The old-school guys were willing and hungry enough to fight year round.

Old school fighters couldn't take off for parties and binges. Rematches were the norm when an opponent proved to be challenging. Real title fights were a full 15 rounds. Respected world-class boxers would fight 10-round non-title bouts to maintain activity and conditioning. The old-school guys were forced to work harder by the boxing economy. If they didn't stay in shape, they would be replaced. Today's fighters deserve their higher salaries. Boxing is a life-or-death sport. All boxers are subject to risks and no one in the audience is taking punches. I still feel that old-school guys, who had to work under harsher conditions, were forced to be better performers and their tougher regimen would give them advantages against today's "softer" fighters.

Sherman Lambert
Los Angeles

AN ARGUMENT FOR BHOP

I read the article titled "The Greatest Modern Middleweight?" where a poll of 24 experts put together a Top 9 ranking. "Modern" in this case means anyone after World War II. While I don't have too many qualms with the nine fighters chosen, it seems insane to me that Bernard Hopkins would rank seventh behind Gennady Golovkin. I'm a big fan of Golovkin; I think he's well on his way to becoming a great middleweight. But he's yet to face a top-level opponent. So how can he be compared to much less rank ahead of Hopkins? Hopkins is the longest-reigning middleweight champion in history with 20 consecutive defenses, five more than Carlos Monzon, who has the second most defenses and who also is ranked ahead of Hopkins. Hopkins is also the first man to hold all four major middleweight sanctioning body titles at once. I'm not even talking about the records he set at light heavyweight. You mention in the article that Roy Jones Jr. beat him before he reached his prime but neglected to say that he avenged that loss just a few years ago. For my money, Hopkins should be ranked not just ahead of Golovkin (obviously) but ahead of Jones, Monzon, and possibly even Marvin Hagler as the second greatest middleweight after Ray Robinson.

Matt Jacobs
New York, New York

NO JOKE

"Freddie The Joke Coach Roach?" said Floyd Mayweather Sr., who's never been a Hall of Fame-caliber trainer. I think Roach just solidified his credentials. I was amazed how Miguel Cotto looked against Daniel Geale; he was virtually untouchable. You have to admire a boxing coach who knows what he's doing. His fighters' performances tell the story.

Errol Ian Ave Acosta
Twentynine Palms, California

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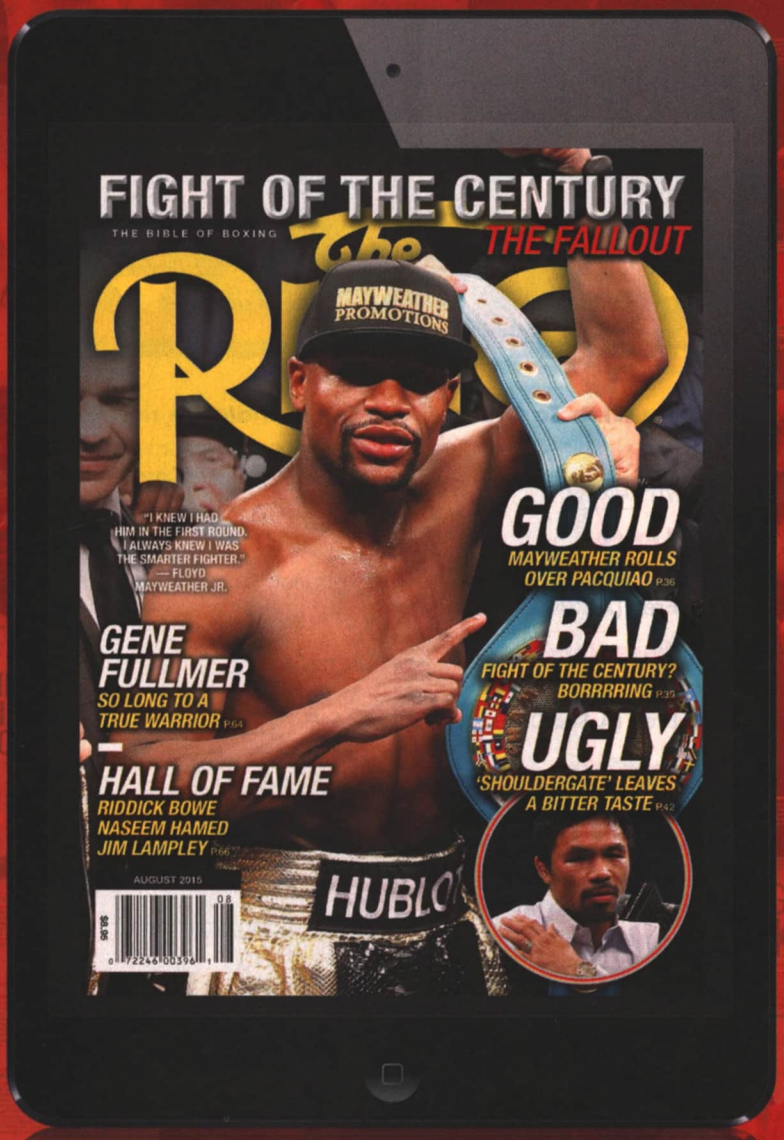

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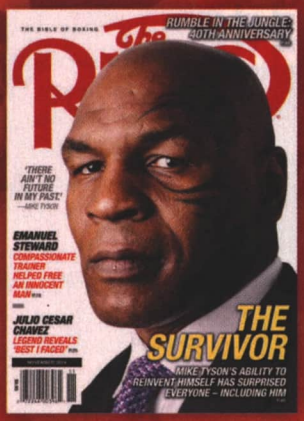

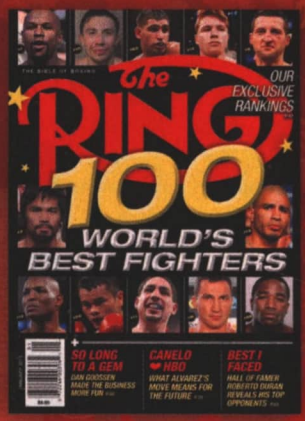

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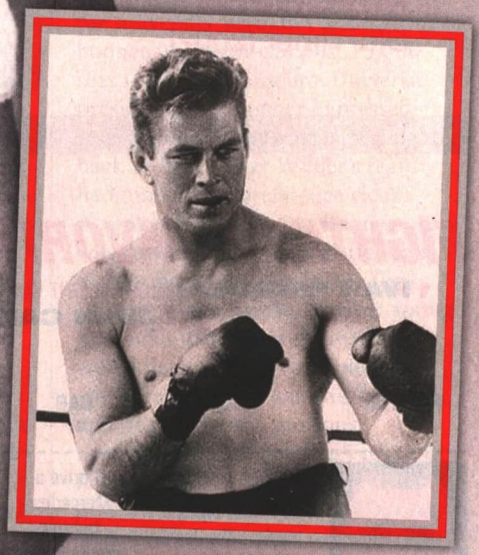
Riddick Bowe grew up not too far from Gene Tunney's stomping grounds.

ADVANCED DEGREES

Degrees of separation between fighters of the past and their more contemporary counterparts. This month, we link one heavyweight champ from New York City to another. Gene Tunney, from Manhattan, won the title by outpointing Jack Dempsey in 1926. Brooklynite Riddick Bowe, a 2015 International Boxing Hall of Fame inductee, became champ when he decisioned Evander Holyfield in 1992.



GENE TUNNEY FOUGHT ...

JACK DEMPSEY, WHO FOUGHT ...

JACK SHARKEY, WHO FOUGHT ...

JOE LOUIS, WHO FOUGHT ...

ROCKY MARCIANO, WHO FOUGHT ...

ARCHIE MOORE, WHO FOUGHT ...

MUHAMMAD ALI, WHO FOUGHT ...

LARRY HOLMES, WHO FOUGHT ...

EVANDER HOLYFIELD, WHO FOUGHT ...

« RIDDICK BOWE

10 A MONTHLY BOXING LIST

This month: The list of British Pioneers in the International Boxing Hall of Fame is long. After all, that's where the modern version of the sport was born. However, not a lot of boxers from the U.K. have entered in the Modern and Old-Timer categories. We had to go back to 1997 to find the 10 most recent additions, including 2015 inductee Naseem Hamed. Here's the list (including year of induction):

1. **FREDDIE WELSH** Old-Timer (1997)
2. **BENNY LYNCH** Old-Timer (1998) »
3. **KEN BUCHANAN** Modern (2000)
4. **RANDY TURPIN** Modern (2001)
5. **CHARLEY MITCHELL** Old-Timer (2002)

6. **OWEN MORAN** Old-Timer (2002)
7. **LEN HARVEY** Old-Timer (2008)
8. **LENNOX LEWIS** Modern (2009)
9. **JOE CALZAGHE** Modern (2014)
10. **NASEEM HAMED** Modern (2015)

Note: 15 Modern and Old-Timer fighters from the U.K. are in the IBHOF.

FIGHTERS' FAVORITES

WHAT BOXERS ARE INTO OUTSIDE THE SPORT

1 IVAN REDKACH LIGHTWEIGHT CONTENDER ★ **2 TAKASHI MIURA** WBC JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT TITLEHOLDER ★ **3 JUAN CARLOS PAYANO** WBA BANTAMWEIGHT TITLEHOLDER

FIGHTER	MUSIC	CAR	FOOD:	TATTOOS	ATHLETE OUTSIDE BOXING	MOVIE	VIDEO GAME
1.	"I like all types of music. I like Jay Z, I like Russian and Ukrainian music."	"I drive a Mercedes but my dream car is a Tesla."	"I like Mexican seafood."	"I have a tattoo on my arm – the same one as Miguel Cotto, who I really like. I have a new one on my arm of a jaguar and on my foot another with the Puerto Rican flag (in homage to Cotto)."	"Usain Bolt."	"Rocky Balboa."	"I don't have the time for video games."
2.	"Japanese rock and pop."	"I don't drive but I like a Lexus."	"Japanese barbecue."	"No tattoos."	"Sumo wrestlers."	"'Rocky.'"	"I don't play video games."
3.	"2Pac, Rick Ross, Drake, DMX."	"Silver Bentley Spur."	"Sushi, sake, Benihana, Texas de Brazil."	"None, sorry. So fresh and so clean."	"Marathon runners and triathletes."	"'Man on Fire,' 'Full Metal Jacket' and 'The Usual Suspects.'"	"'Pacman.'"

— **Anson Wainwright**

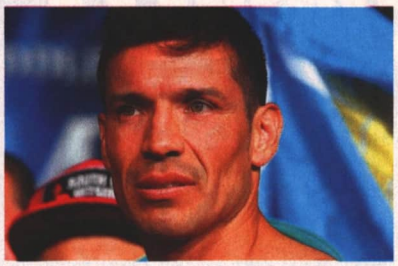
GOOD, BAD, WORSE

By **Michael Rosenthal**

THE BEST AND WORST IN BOXING FROM THE PAST MONTH

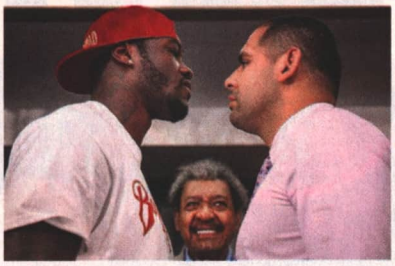
GOOD

The one overriding theme of Max Kellerman's interview with Miguel Cotto after Cotto stopped Daniel Geale on June 6 was one man: Freddie Roach. "Being here after 10 hard weeks in L.A. training with Freddie and perform[ing] like that just makes me feel like the Miguel from the 2000s, 2010, you know, 2004. I said [to] Freddie a couple minutes ago he's the best thing to ever happen to my career. And he is." And, after Kellerman said the man who destroyed Geale was "the Miguel Cotto we remember," Cotto added: "It's all about Freddie Roach." I bring this up because such gratitude isn't common in boxing, in which loyalty very often means little and the bottom line means everything. I don't know whether Roach saved Cotto's career but that appears to be the case. The experts more or less wrote him off as a has-been after back-to-back losses against Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Austin Trout. Then Cotto turned to Roach, who brought focus back to Cotto's strengths and got him to believe in himself again. And to hear Cotto express his genuine gratitude for that reminded me of something that I sometimes forget in this cutthroat, ego-driven business: There are good, humble people in boxing.



BAD

I wish Sergio Martinez's career could've gone on a little while longer. The charismatic Argentine's peak didn't last long because of his late start and injuries but it was fun while it lasted. Martinez, an all-around athlete, fought in anonymity while he learned his craft in his home country and in Europe and then burst onto the American scene with his flashy style in a series of dramatic fights that led to the RING middleweight title. No one who saw it will forget his one-punch knockout of Paul Williams in 2010, one of the most devastating shots in recent years. He became one of those must-see attractions. And then, very suddenly, it was over. He injured his right knee in the 12th and final round of his victory over Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. and was never the same. He defeated Martin Murray by a disputed decision in Buenos Aires and then, a crippled shell of what he once was, he took a bad beating from Cotto. That was that. He announced his retirement at 40 in June. Martinez (51-3-2, 28 KOs) will be remembered as a gifted athlete and a spirited, classy boxer who was among the better fighters of his era. Next stop: Hall of Fame.



WORSE

Deontay Wilder was pleased to make the first defense of his WBC heavyweight title in front of his fans on June 13 at Bartow Arena on the campus of the University of Alabama at Birmingham. That wasn't his dream, though. His dream was to fight in his hometown of Tuscaloosa, the site of the University of Alabama and about an hour's drive from Birmingham. The powers that be at the university wouldn't allow it to happen at the on-campus, 15,000-seat Coleman Coliseum. University president Judy Bonner expressed reservations about hosting the fight back in April, after Wilder's team had made their preference clear. A spokesman later said Bonner was concerned about logistics and disrupting students. C'mon. Your favorite son, a bright, likeable young man who just won a share of the world heavyweight championship wants to celebrate with his friends and neighbors in a glorious homecoming and you can't make it happen? Wilder was hurt. He said afterward that he would do business with UAB until a new venue is built in Tuscaloosa. Who could blame him?

RING POLL

A MONTHLY POLL OF OUR RINGTV.COM READERS

A number of intriguing matchups are either set or seem possible. We asked: **What's the best/biggest fight to be made in the second half of 2015?** Here is how you responded.

THE PERCENTAGES:

58.76	MIGUEL COTTO VS. CANELO ALVAREZ
23.87	CARL FROCH VS. GENNADY GOLOVKIN
6.75	FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR. VS. AMIR KHAN
5.55	WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO VS. TYSON FURY
5.07	KELL BROOK VS. AMIR KHAN

Note: 4,253 readers voted

LENNOX LEWIS

Lennox Lewis lands a left to the face of the best fighter he ever met in the ring.

Lennox Lewis was only the third heavyweight champion to defeat every opponent he ever faced – including rematches against those who beat him – and the last man to be considered the undisputed king of the glamor division.

The 6-foot-5 colossus – and chess wizard – strategically decimated a heavyweight landscape populated by top opposition and, in a world of blood and guts, stood relatively unblemished on a throne that he always proclaimed was his destiny.

A brilliant amateur career culminated in a gold medal at the Seoul Olympics in 1988 and, despite representing his adopted country of Canada in the unpaid ranks, Lewis elected to turn professional in his native England in 1989.

The hard-hitting Londoner put together a string of eye-catching wins but the breakout moment was a spectacular second-round stoppage

of Donovan "Razor" Ruddock in October 1992, which made Lewis the mandatory challenger for the WBC title.

Undisputed champion Riddick Bowe, who lost to Lewis in the Olympic super heavyweight final, was ordered to fulfill the mandatory defense but responded by distastefully dumping the belt in a trash can before a throng of assembled media.

Lewis was upgraded to WBC titleholder by default and he defended the belt three times, but his own luck was about to run out.

A shocking second-round loss to Oliver McCall in September 1994 was a major setback but it did result in the crucial intervention of Emanuel Steward. The legendary Detroit coach, who had orchestrated Lewis' downfall in McCall's corner, was keen to work with the Englishman and iron out basic flaws.

Lewis became almost unbeatable under Steward's guidance. His balance improved, his combinations were crisper and an omnipresent left jab altered the features of contender after contender.

Lewis reclaimed the WBC title with a revenge win over McCall in 1997 and unified the crown in his second fight against Evander Holyfield nearly three years later. Their first bout was declared a draw, although the consensus was that Lewis had won with room to spare.

In November 2001, Lewis began his third world-title reign when he avenged a fifth-round knockout defeat to Hasim Rahman by poleaxing the American with a right in the fourth. He was now at his peak and closed out a glorious career with lucrative victories over Mike Tyson and Vitali Klitschko.

Since his retirement, in 2004, the great ex-champion has focused much of his attention on family. He has four children with his wife, Violet. The business side of boxing, which Lewis often referred to as "politricks," never appealed to him and he is staying clear.

"I promote youth but keep away from the cloak-and-dagger stuff which exists in the pro game," said Lewis, who endured highly publicized legal disputes with promoters Don King and Panos Eliades.

"I spend a lot of my time in Jamaica doing charity work and I also like helping the kids when it comes to boxing."

A profoundly content Lewis agreed to speak to THE RING about the best fighters he faced in 10 key categories.

BEST SKILLS

Evander Holyfield: Evander was very talented, although I was disappointed that he used his head as a punch in those fights. The word was that he was the greatest heavyweight of our era but nobody could say that until he fought Lennox Lewis. In the first fight he was overconfident, singing during his ring walk, so I went after him and he was shocked to get that draw. Second time around he knew what to expect so it was a tougher fight but I still won comfortably.

BEST JAB

Razor Ruddock: Ruddock had a good jab before he hit the canvas.

BEST DEFENSE

Holyfield: Holyfield had excellent variety to his defense. He could cross his arms like George Foreman but he was also well schooled in the traditional type of defense you get taught in the amateurs. Evander presented a real challenge and I had to put in a lot of effort to break through. I couldn't just land one or two shots and be content; it had to be threes, fours and fives.

BEST CHIN

Oliver McCall: There is no doubt. He was Mike Tyson's sparring partner for years and had "cracking" reflexes.

BEST PUNCHER

Shannon Briggs: He lacked endurance but Briggs certainly knew how to put his bodyweight behind a punch. Unfortunately for him you need the full package when you face me so power isn't enough. Fans may expect me to say McCall or Hasim Rahman for punching power but I basically set myself up against both of them.

FASTEST HANDS

Briggs: I was surprised by Briggs' hand speed. He was able to close the gap very quickly and that allowed him to get off the big punches. Sometimes you don't realize how quick someone is until you're in there.

FASTEST FEET

Zeljko Mavrovic: I had to break him down by cutting off the ring. Mavrovic moved well but he was in survival mode from the moment the fight started.

SMARTEST

Vitali Klitschko: Vitali used his awkwardness to good effect. Everyone said that I should have fought him again but he was just icing on my retirement cake. I took him on at short notice and despite being mentally ready, my physical preparation wasn't ideal. I beat him at my worst so there was no need for a rematch. He definitely experienced the uppercuts.

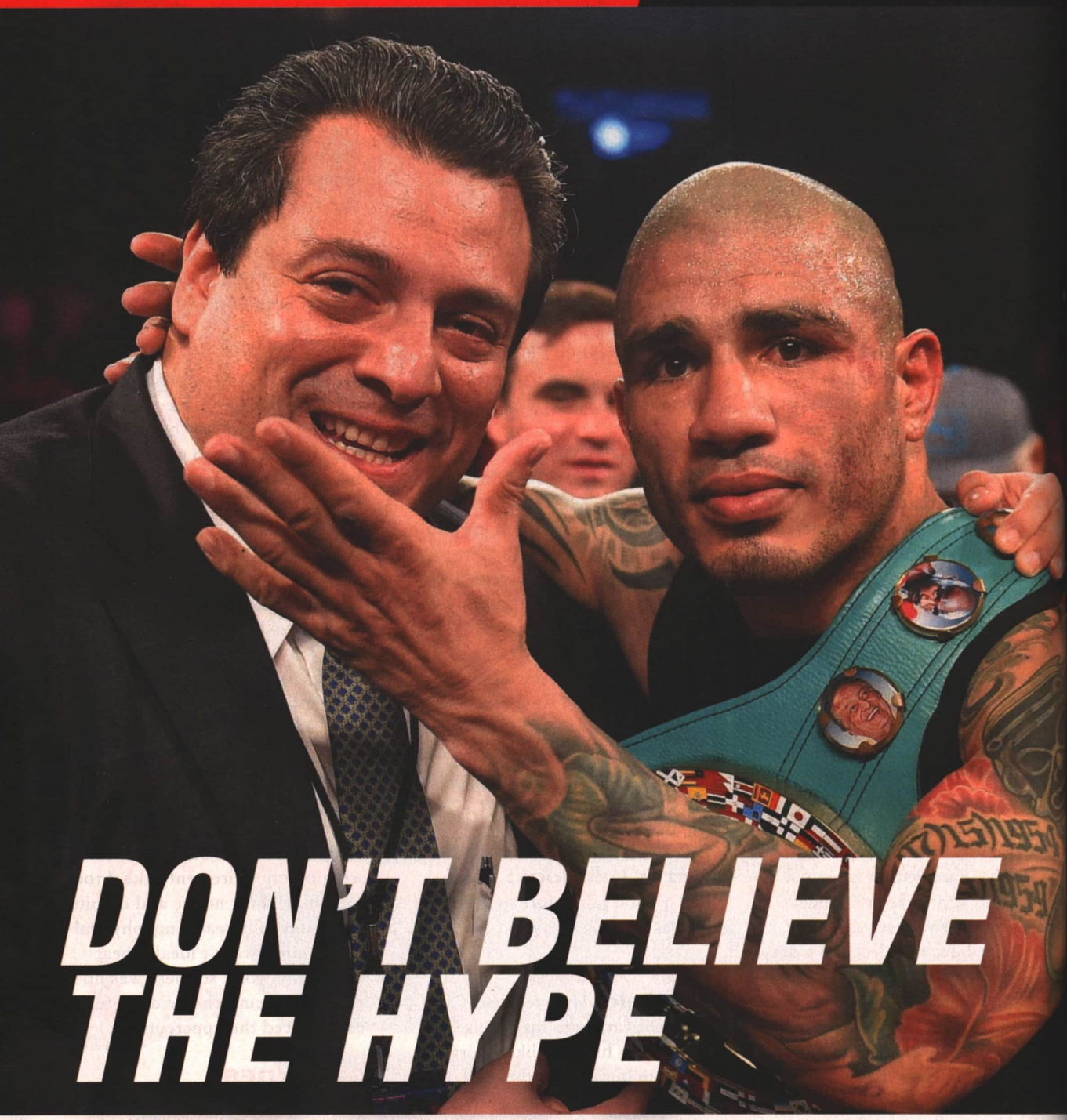
STRONGEST

Hasim Rahman: Rahman was very strong in the first fight and then he landed a lucky punch. People say that there's no such thing as a lucky punch but it's a punch thrown "one time." In the rematch he couldn't get near me so I don't know how strong he was that night.

BEST OVERALL

Holyfield: Holyfield was the best opponent I faced in my career.

By David Greisman



DON'T BELIEVE THE HYPE

MIGUEL COTTO'S RUN AT MIDDLEWEIGHT ISN'T AS IMPRESSIVE AS IT MIGHT SEEM

Miguel Cotto's reign at middleweight is as limp as the legs of the horribly hobbled champion he dethroned last year.

That may seem too harsh given how phenomenal Cotto looked while helping Sergio Martinez decide to quit the sport and convincing Daniel Geale to quit their fight. He has been rejuvenated after switching to trainer Freddie Roach. But there's a difference between looking great and being great.

Part of the problem is that Cotto always was going to look good against Martinez and Geale given their conditions. The other big issue is that Cotto holds the RING and WBC 160-pound crowns but has little desire beyond merely being king. He is essentially sitting on the throne without truly defending it. And yet somehow that stance is simultaneously objectionable and understandable.

It's not Cotto's fault that Martinez

Miguel Cotto celebrates his victory over Daniel Geale with WBC President Mauricio Sulaiman (left).

came in as damaged goods despite his claims of being otherwise. Cotto is to blame, however, for not fighting again for another year and then strategically requiring Geale to fight at a catchweight of 157 pounds. Geale was weakened from coming in so light, then slowed by overcompensating and coming back to the ring too heavy. Cotto actually came in below 154, retaining the speed that would enhance his power.

Cotto once had to accept a catchweight himself in order to face Manny Pacquiao for a huge pay-per-view payday. That doesn't make it any more acceptable to do the same to Geale. Cotto was like a former hazing victim taking pleasure in finally being on the giving end. What pride is there in beating someone who wasn't allowed to be at his best?

Cotto says he isn't a middleweight but is using his sanctioning-body title as a bargaining chip. Geale wanted the belt as much as he needed the payday and was willing to sacrifice himself in the hopes of getting both. That leverage is why Cotto's team has been maneuvering to hold onto the title — a title that mandatory challenger Gennady Golovkin wants — while delaying a fight with "GGG," a bout that might never actually happen.

Cotto is blatantly ducking Golovkin yet it wouldn't be fair to say he's chicken for doing so.

Instead, Cotto will probably opt for a fight with Canelo Alvarez, a decision that is best for him, best for boxing and perhaps may even benefit Golovkin. Cotto vs. Canelo is the most lucrative fight available for both that doesn't involve Floyd Mayweather Jr. or Pacquiao. It is expected to excite whereas Golovkin would be more likely to expose whomever he faces, proving that no one in the division is near his level. Whomever fights "GGG" would be Going, Going, Gone.

Golovkin wouldn't gain as much from beating people he was predicted to pummel, no matter how much star power he overpowered. He wants Cotto to man up and face him or drop the title. Either way, Golovkin can assert his superiority. He can inherit Cotto's vacated title. And he can continue to become an even bigger star, which may mean an increasingly sizable reward that would entice the Cotto-Canelo winner to take on such a huge risk.

There isn't much else of note for Golovkin at 160 anyway, at least of the opponents who are available or not avoiding him because of the business of boxing. It's a shame that so few are willing to face him and that he has been forced to consider challenging super middleweights in order to get big fights.

The most Cotto has done as champion at 160 is beat the diminished version of a guy Golovkin had already handled a year ago. That's par for the course for a fighter whose best wins at 154 were against a weak and injured Yuri Foreman, an old Ricardo Mayorga and a half-blind Antonio Margarito.

Cotto went on to challenge himself in losses to Mayweather and Austin Trout. And he'll face a challenge as well in Canelo Alvarez. Just don't expect him to hurry toward Golovkin until all better options have been exhausted. He'll remain a champion so long as he can make some guys make weight and for as long as he can make the rest of them wait.

★

Cotto isn't the only one

being grumbled about in this issue. There's also James Kirkland, who only knows how to move forward in the ring and has kept his career from advancing outside of it. He has squandered some of his best years with criminal behavior, lawsuits against and disputes within his team, and inactivity due to all of the above. He lost money by laying low, a lost opportunity now that he was laid out by Canelo Alvarez.

Then there's Amir Khan, who has long talked about why he deserves to face Mayweather. He failed to back it up, though, by being made to back up so much against Chris Algieri. Khan may have considered the light-hitting Algieri to be a soft touch, except Khan came in a touch soft while Algieri loomed larger than before and hit harder than expected. Khan won on the scorecards but won't score a Mayweather fight.

Khan had spoken before about how titleholder Kell Brook didn't deserve to face him. Given the payday involved in an all-U.K. showdown, Khan better hope now that Brook will still give him a shot.

Finally there's Vic Darchinyan — and final should describe his last fight, an eighth-round technical knockout against featherweight contender Jesus Cuellar. Darchinyan was competitive before getting cracked, dropped and stopped. As game as Darchinyan still can be, he's otherwise a 39-year-old former flyweight who is too old and too small against younger and larger opponents. He was ahead on the cards against Nonito Donaire in their rematch before getting caught in 2013. He should've been done when Nicholas Walters knocked him out last year.

This makes three times in four fights that Darch has been starched. Apparently you really can spell "victory" without Vic.

By Thomas Hauser

SHOULD BOXING ADOPT A 'DRAWBREAKER' ROUND?

THE CONCEPT IS INTRIGUING BUT, BECAUSE OF MANY POTENTIAL PITFALLS, AUTHORITIES MUST TREAD CAREFULLY

Ties might play well in fashion circles. But for the most part, they're unwelcome in sports. Hence, the oft-repeated maxim: "A tie is like kissing your sister."

Virtually all sports have a tie-breaker formula. An extra period, a playoff, whatever. Boxing has traditionally accepted draws on a fighter's record. But that might be changing.

The recent "Boxcino" tournament on ESPN2 called for a "drawbreaker" round in the event that a bout would otherwise have been declared a draw on the judges' scorecards. The first two fights in the heavyweight Boxcino tournament that aired on Feb. 20, 2015, went to overtime.

The "drawbreaker" round isn't new in boxing. On April 15, 1977, Don Elbaum promoted a fight at Dickinson High School in Jersey City, New Jersey, between Bruce Curry and Rafael Rodriguez. The contracts provided that if the judges' scorecards were even after 10 rounds, there would be an 11th stanza. That's what happened and Curry won it.

Russell Peltz promoted two championship fights for vacant titles in the 1980s that ended with a drawbreaker round. On Nov. 6, 1987, Doug DeWitt outpointed Tony Thornton over 13 rounds in a USBA title bout. On Oct. 18, 1988, Sanderline Williams lost a 13th-round drawbreaker against Ronnie Essett in an NABF title contest.

Top Rank also employed an extra-round drawbreaker for several tournament fights during the early years of "Top Rank Boxing" on ESPN.

"I love it," says Elbaum. "I think it should be done for all title fights, all tournament fights and all main events."

Peter Quillin (left) and Andy Lee had to settle for a draw under the current system.

Should it?

It's important to start with the understanding that rules in sports aren't religious scriptures. They're revised all the time to make action more exciting, accommodate television and improve safety standards. Once, there was no shot clock in basketball and no designated hitter in baseball. Championship fights were 15 rounds.

Two issues head the list of concerns where drawbreaker rounds in boxing are concerned. The first is whether they endanger the health and safety of fighters.

Michael Schwartz is chief ringside physician and chairman of the medical advisory board for Foxwoods Resort Casino, Mohegan Sun Casino and the Connecticut State Athletic Commission.

"I don't have a problem with a drawbreaker round," Dr. Schwartz said. "I think it's important that the doctors look at each fighter after the final regulation round and that the

scores are tabulated quickly after the final regulation round. That way, in terms of the break in the action and the fighters cooling off, it's similar to the 5-minute recovery period that a fighter is allowed after a low blow."

Margaret Goodman, former chief ringside physician and chairwoman of the medical advisory board for the Nevada State Athletic Commission, takes a contrary view.

"Boxing isn't like other sports," Dr. Goodman posits. "You train a fighter to fight for a certain number of rounds and tell him to give it everything he has in the final round. And then, when he's exhausted and thinks the fight is over, you tell him he has to fight another round. I'm not aware of hard medical evidence one way or the other as to whether a fighter is more susceptible to injury in a tiebreaker round. But I have an uneasy feeling about it."

There are also conflicting opinions with regard to how a drawbreaker round affects the essence of the competition.

"I love it," promoter Lou DiBella declares. "A round when both fighters know with certainty that everything is on the line is as compelling as anything you can get in sports."

But Teddy Atlas isn't sold on the drawbreaker round.

"I'd rather that they get to the conclusion of a fight without it," Atlas says. "Fighters prepare physically and mentally to fight for a certain number of rounds. A fighter thinks the fight is over after six or eight rounds or whatever it is. There's a psychological release no matter what you've told him before about a tiebreaker round. And in something as difficult as boxing, once you have that release, it's hard to get the right mindset back. That means you're likely to see competition that's a little less pure. Either the fighter is holding something back in what's most likely the final round or he's spent when he goes out for the extra round. Neither one is good."

Also, there's a significant flaw in the "drawbreaker" formula. The fighter who wins the extra round on the judges' scorecards is declared the winner. But under that formula, it's possible for a fighter to end the night trailing on two of the three judges' scorecards and still win the fight.

Here's how that could happen.

At the end of six rounds, Judge A scores the fight 58-56 for Red Corner. Judge B scores the fight 58-56 for Blue Corner. Judge C has the fight even. Then Judge C scores the drawbreaker round for Blue Corner while A and B score it for Red Corner, so Red Corner wins the fight. That means, overall, Judge A has Red Corner ahead by three points. But Judges B and C each had Blue Corner (the loser of the extra round) ahead by one point after seven rounds.

So how should draws be eliminated if one feels the need to eliminate them?

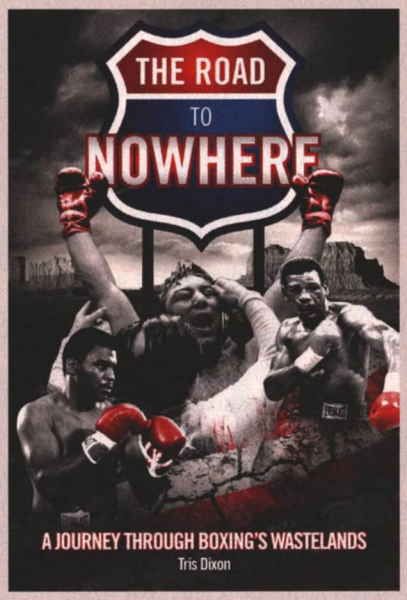
A coin flip is too arbitrary. Relying on a social media poll (which was Boxcino's fallback position in the event a drawbreaker round was judged even) would open the door to ballot-box stuffing. It would also be inadvisable to add the three judges' scorecards together to arrive at a total points tally because that would give too much influence to one judge.

A fourth alternative would be to call upon the referee to score the fight in the event that the judges' scorecards are even. Referees scored fights for more than a century. Indeed, there were many jurisdictions in which the referee cast the only vote.

Finally, one might apply a supplemental points system to a judge's scorecard that's even after the scheduled number of rounds. Some rounds are easy to score. They're clearly 10-9 in favor of a given fighter. Other rounds are hard to call. When a judge fills out his or her card for a fight where a drawbreaker might be necessary, the "10" could be circled for each round where the winner is clear. Add up the number of circled 10-9 rounds on that judge's card and you're likely to have a winner.

State athletic commissions should think this issue through rather than simply rubber stamping a solution. ★

ON THE BOOKSHELF



'THE ROAD TO NOWHERE': WELL WRITTEN, INSIGHTFUL

In 2001, Tris Dixon, then an aspiring amateur boxer in England, came to the United States with an eye toward improving his ring skills. Then he changed course.

Armed with a Greyhound bus pass and extremely limited funds, Dixon traveled around the United States for several months, interviewing former fighters. Many of them weren't doing well. In addition to hard economic circumstances, boxing had taken a physical toll upon them. Dixon learned a great deal about boxing and also about himself. By the time he left America, he was a writer.

In the years that followed, Dixon wrote for numerous publications and served as editor of Boxing News. Now he has recounted his American journey in book form.

"The Road to Nowhere" (Pitch Publishing) has the feel of Roger Kahn's baseball classic, "The Boys of Summer." Kahn tracked down members of the 1955 Brooklyn

Dodgers 16 years after their World Series triumph over the New York Yankees and used their circumstances to tell the story of their lives and baseball.

Dixon's work is similar in tone. He writes well. He understands boxing. And he puts things in context.

There are a lot of thoughts in "The Road to Nowhere" that are worth repeating. Among my favorites are:

- **Harold Johnson:** "Of course, I got nervous before a fight. Going into the ring is like walking in a cemetery at night."
- **Jeff Chandler,** on winning the WBA bantamweight crown: "I remember the night like yesterday. When I won, I threw my arms up, and I thought they were going to stretch forever. I felt I could jump straight up and never come down."
- **George Chuvalo:** "If I told you how much I made clear for fighting Ali [in 1966], you would say, 'What happened?' After taxes and everything else, I made seven hundred dollars per round. People ask, 'How much did you make for fighting Ali? Half a million bucks?' ... A little lower ... 'Quarter of a million?' ... No, a little lower than that."
- **Dwight Qawi,** on the powers that be in boxing: "They make money off us, but their attitude is that we owe them."
- **Marvis Frazier,** on being knocked out in the first round by Larry Holmes: "I felt like a maggot or a worm. I felt I had embarrassed my whole family in front of the entire world."
- **Micky Ward:** "People lose and they fall apart like it's the end of the world. But if you take a loss like a win and learn from it, you come back stronger. It makes you a better fighter and person. I should know. I've had eleven of them."
- **Arturo Gatti,** on his three fights against Ward: "I'd always said, 'The day I fight somebody who has the same mentality that I have, I'm going to have problems.' Then Micky Ward came along with that mentality. People were cheering us for the way we fought. Not cheering either one of us but both of us. We showed you don't have to hate someone to give it your best."
- **Buster Douglas,** on fighting Mike Tyson: "Before the fight, I didn't have nobody bothering me because nobody gave me a chance. We had a press conference in Japan, and there were like four people there. When Tyson had one, it was packed. He's a monster. He's a beast. But he's short to me. He's one-dimensional. I never thought he was s—t. I thought he was going to get up [after I knocked him down]. But when I saw him reaching for his mouthpiece, I thought, 'It's over. It's over, baby.'"

Reflecting on the fighters that he met on his journey across America, Dixon writes, "They all had once bounced off the colorful pages of magazines and books in my childhood like superheroes. They were strong, muscular, and powerful. Now, after every sorrowful encounter with a faded champion, I felt more worldly-wise. I felt myself hardening. They were helping me grow and mature."

It's a pleasure to read good writing. "The Road to Nowhere" is good writing.

★

"Boxing in Philadelphia" by Gabe Oppenheim (Rowman & Littlefield) has a title that's a bit misleading. Once Oppenheim moves past a brief history of Philadelphia boxing, the book is, in significant measure, about a handful of fighters.

Jimmy Young, Meldrick Taylor and Mike Jones get a lot of attention. Joe Frazier, Bernard Hopkins and Matthew Saad Muhammad don't. These choices seem to have been made in large part on the basis of the author's access to fighters and their respective camps rather than a thought-out game plan. But unlike Tris Dixon's work, which is also heavily weighted toward access, Oppenheim's loses focus at times.

My favorite quote in "Boxing in Philadelphia" comes from Denzil Batchelor, a British journalist who plied his trade in the middle decades of the 20th century.

"I should be content to see no more fights," Batchelor wrote, "but very sad indeed to have to foreswear the literature this disgrace and glory of the past has produced."

Some promising young fighters make it to the top. Others don't. The same can be said of writers.

Oppenheim is passionate about boxing and only 27 years old. It will be interesting to see how he develops as a writer and what he adds to the literature of boxing in the future.

★

W.C. Heinz, who died in 2008 at age 93, is on the short list of America's greatest sportswriters. "The Top of His Game" (Edited by Bill Littlefield and published by the Library of America) is an anthology of columns and longer pieces written by Heinz between 1947 and 1979.

Heinz was a good writer. "Very good," as Damon Runyon once wrote on a piece of paper before underlining "very good" three times. He had a wonderful eye for detail and explored nooks and crannies in the sweet science that many writers didn't even know existed.

Boxing is well-represented in "The Top of His Game." My favorite piece is a tribute to Sugar Ray Robinson.

During his glory years, Robinson had owned a fuchsia Cadillac, a conspicuous symbol of his success. The closing pages of Heinz's article recounts an exchange between himself and the original Sugar Ray as they walked through a parking lot in 1979.

"Are you still on the Cadillac kick?" Heinz queried.

"No," the greatest fighter of all time answered. "The car I drive now is that little red Pinto. But I've been there."

Thomas Hauser can be reached by email at thauser@rcn.com. His most recent book ("Thomas Hauser on Boxing") was published by the University of Arkansas Press.

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By **Brian Harty**

Boxing cards staged by one Russian promoter won't have the kind of sex appeal you see here.

A MODEST PROPOSAL

"Dismay!" "Sadness!" Words used to describe what **Paulie Malignaggi** intends to wear to the weigh-in for **Danny Garcia**? No, but close. They are online reactions to Russian promoter **Andrew Ryabinsky's** announcement that ring-card girls will no longer wear bikinis during his shows.

"This is a serious international sporting event, not a strip club," said Ryabinsky, who implemented the policy out of respect for Muslim fans and fighters who prefer a bit more modesty with their visual aids. The new approach to fashion will be more "tasteful" and "civilized."

Presumably the women are happy with the change since they'll no longer have to use blankets during rounds or endure the indignity of stepping between the ropes wearing a thong but the fan reaction in a survey by sports.ru was negative. About three quarters of those polled were opposed to stripping the sex out of their violence.

Among the industry people who spoke up in support of abolishing the scanty look was former heavyweight titleholder **Nikolai Valuev,** whose 7-foot frame always did distract from his uncommon intellect. "Those kinds of girls can be easily found in the certain places," he said.

Updating a story from last issue, who would've bet that **Evander Holyfield** vs. **Mitt Romney** would have more action than **Mayweather** vs. **Pacquiao**? A ripped-and-ready Romney scored a "knockdown" during the charity event in Salt Lake City but then was compelled to flee until his corner threw in the towel in Round 2.

This hardly needs reporting but **Mayweather** and **Pacquiao** were named the two highest-paid athletes of the year by Forbes (remember, on planet Forbes the year begins and ends in June). Mayweather pocketed $300 million of your money while Pacquiao absconded with a mere $160 million.

The boxing business hasn't worked out as well for **Curtis "50 Cent" Jackson**, whose young company, **SMS Promotions**, filed for bankruptcy in late May. **Yuriorkis Gamboa**, Jackson's star client, told TMZ that he'll stay loyal and ride out the storm with SMS.

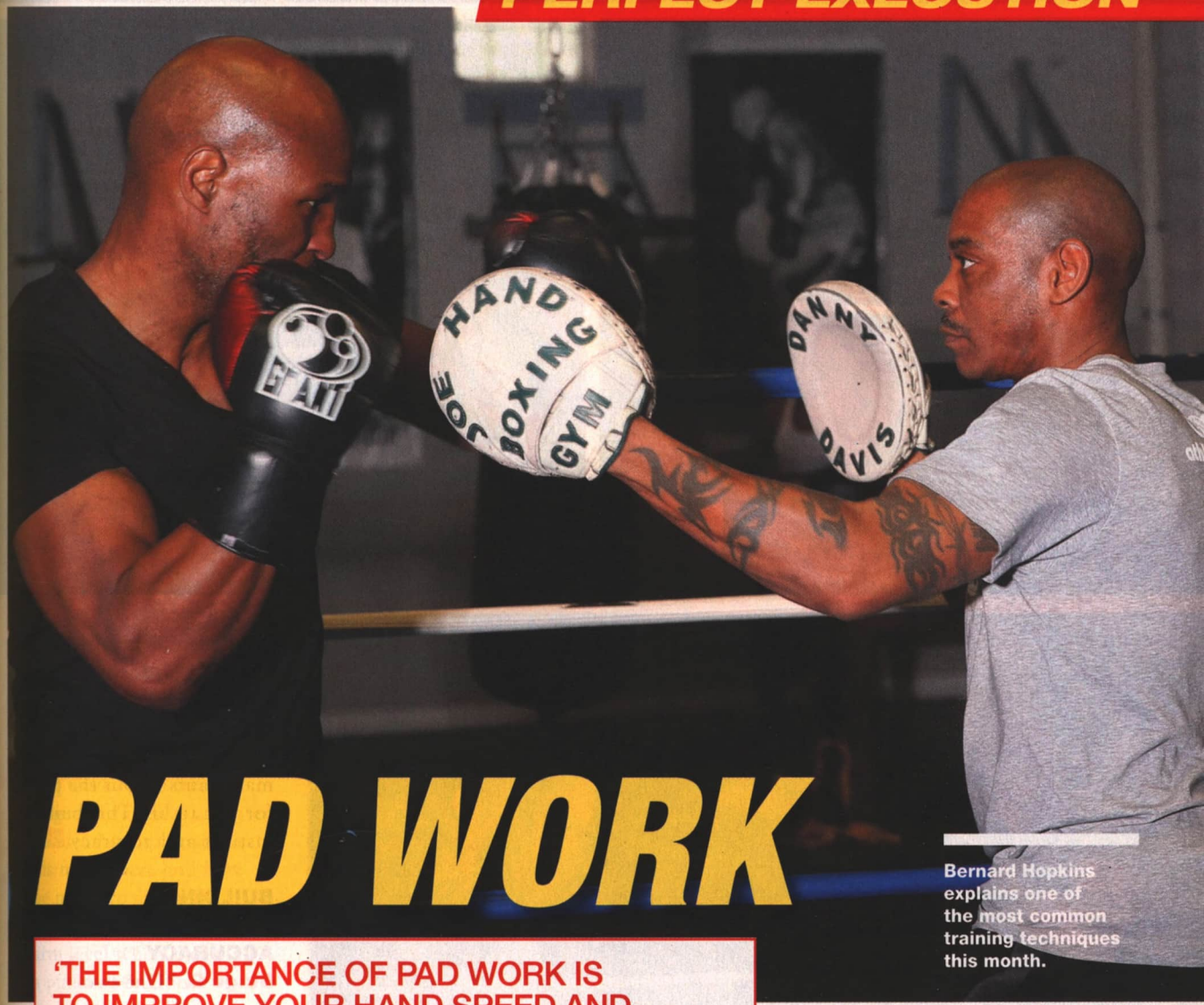
TV producer **Michael King,** who co-created blockbuster shows like "Oprah" and "Dr. Phil," died on May 27 at the age of 67. King also created the "All American Heavyweights" program to recruit college athletes not drafted by the NBA and NFL to determine whether they had a knack for boxing. One who did is undefeated up-and-comer **Dominic Breazeale.**

Kirk Kerkorian, whose MGM Resorts International empire included one of boxing's most iconic venues in Las Vegas, died at the age of 98 on June 15. The billionaire was himself a fighter, dropping out in eighth grade to become a hard-punching amateur nicknamed "Rifle Right Kerkorian."

Frank Cappuccino's career as a referee began in 1958, ended in 2008 and comprises 18 pages of assignments on boxrec.com. Just in 2002 those gigs included **Bernard Hopkins'** Monzon-matching 15th defense of his middleweight title against **Carl Daniels** and **Micky Ward's** iconic first meeting with **Arturo Gatti**, THE RING's Fight of the Year. Cappuccino died on June 8 in Pennsylvania at the age of 86.

THE RING's No. 10 pound-for-pound female fighter, **Ava Knight-Salica,** made the final 40 of the WWE's "Tough Enough" reality competition to find new wrestlers but was eliminated on the first day. She enthusiastically wished the other competitors luck and posted her credo on Instagram: "I'm a boxer, a pure athlete. I'm not an actress, I'm not animated. I'm real and cutthroat about what I do and get things done without making a scene."

Sergio Martinez officially announced his retirement almost exactly one year after the popular Argentine lost his middleweight throne to **Miguel Cotto** in June 2014. Martinez followed his title-winning decision over **Kelly Pavlik** in 2010 with a second-round knockout of **Paul Williams** that our robot ancestors will still be flinching at in a thousand years. That win launched a sensational run that essentially ended with a knee injury in the final round of his fight against **Julio Cesar Chavez Jr.,** whom he still nearly shut out on the cards. Martinez made his announcement during induction week at the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York, a place to which he will undoubtedly return some day.



PAD WORK

Bernard Hopkins explains one of the most common training techniques this month.

'THE IMPORTANCE OF PAD WORK IS TO IMPROVE YOUR HAND SPEED AND PUNCHING ACCURACY'

Good boxing demands good technique. A missed step here, an off-balance shot there, and you could be looking up from the canvas. The sport is as much about foot positioning as it is punching power. It's a ballet of fists and feet, of the whole body functioning as one. To achieve that, one must master the fundamentals.

Perhaps no one today has a better understanding of the basics than future Hall of Famer Bernard Hopkins, which is why he plays the leading role in "Perfect Execution."

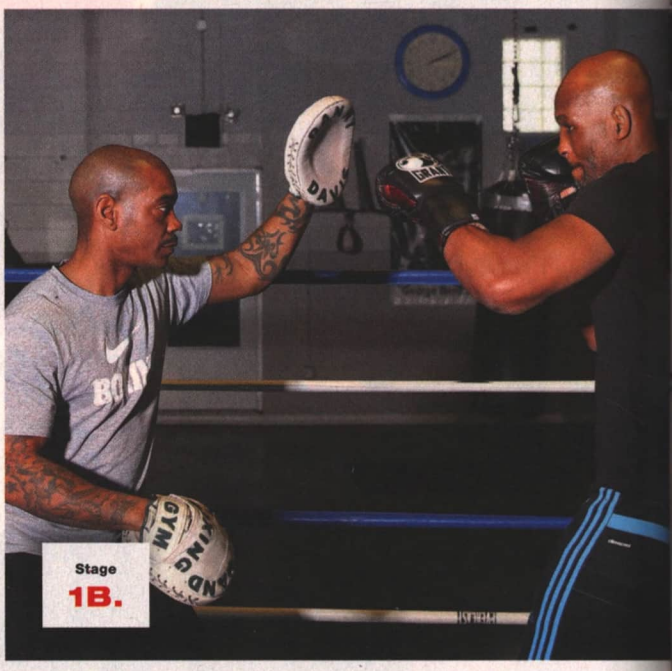
Each month in THE RING Magazine, Hopkins demonstrates a particular skill and explains how to execute it. Photographs help you understand the moves. Our website, RingTV.com, also features audio this month that allows you to listen as Hopkins imparts his wisdom.

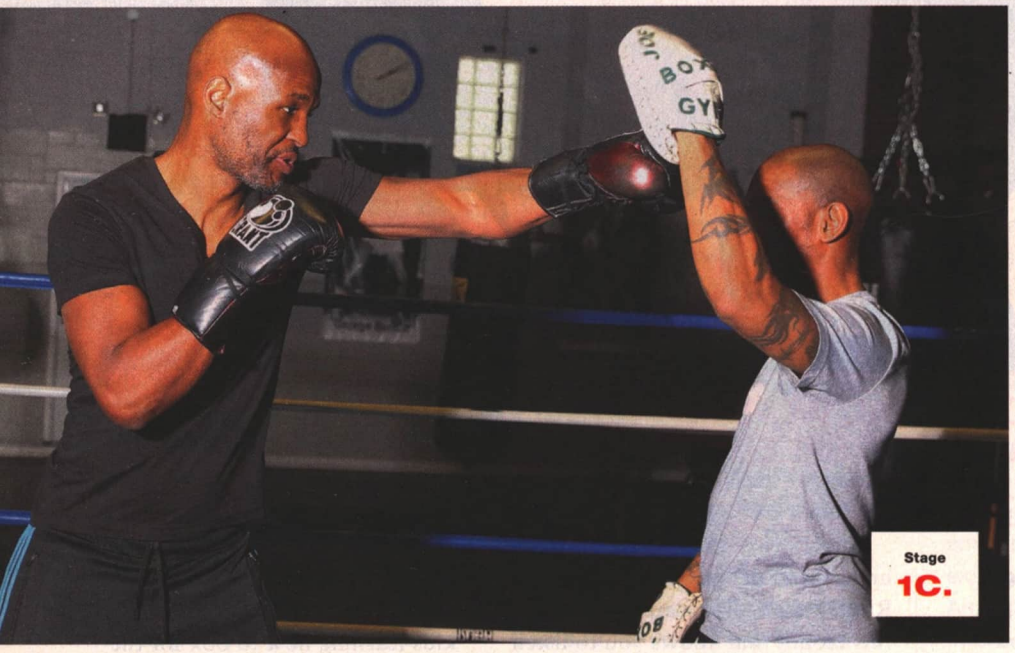
THIS MONTH: PAD WORK. "The importance of pad work is to improve your hand speed and punching accuracy. This is one of the most significant parts of training. It helps you build and create a vision of a fight plan. You work on the holes of your opponent's defense. You better have someone who knows what they're doing holding the pads. That's as important as the pad work itself. If you're dealing with someone who doesn't really know what they're doing, just holding the pads up so you can hit them, that doesn't benefit anyone. Make sure, and I can't stress this enough to young kids learning how to box for the first time, make sure you work with someone who knows what they're doing. You have to get feedback from the pad man. Like anything, the more reps on the pads that you do, the better it builds muscle memory. To be an effective fighter, you have to be accurate and be able to position your punches. That's where pad work comes into play."

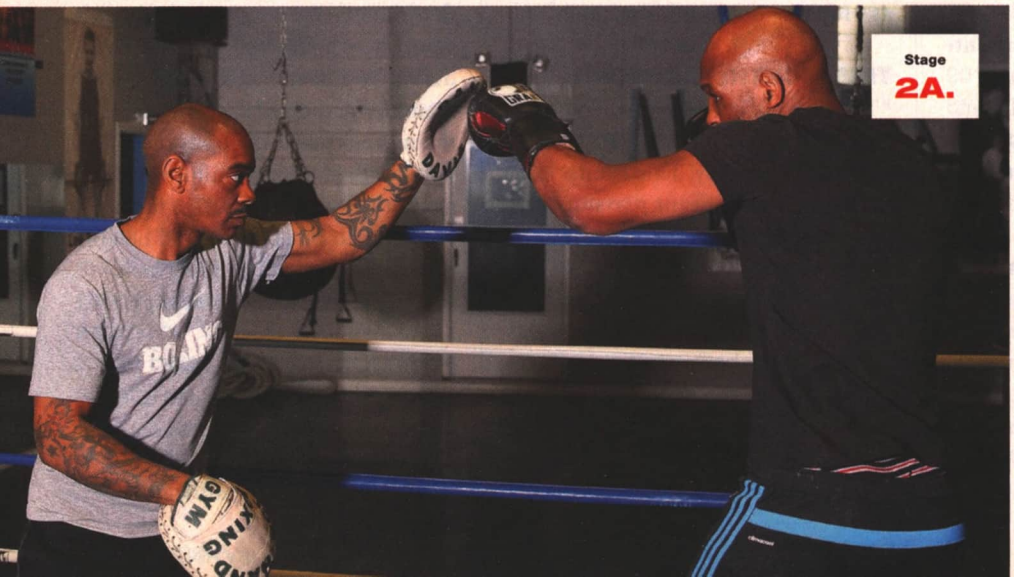
POSITIONING THE JAB

Stage 1. "The importance of the jab off pad work is the pad man can position the pad anywhere he wants. You have to find the pad with the

ED MULHOLLAND







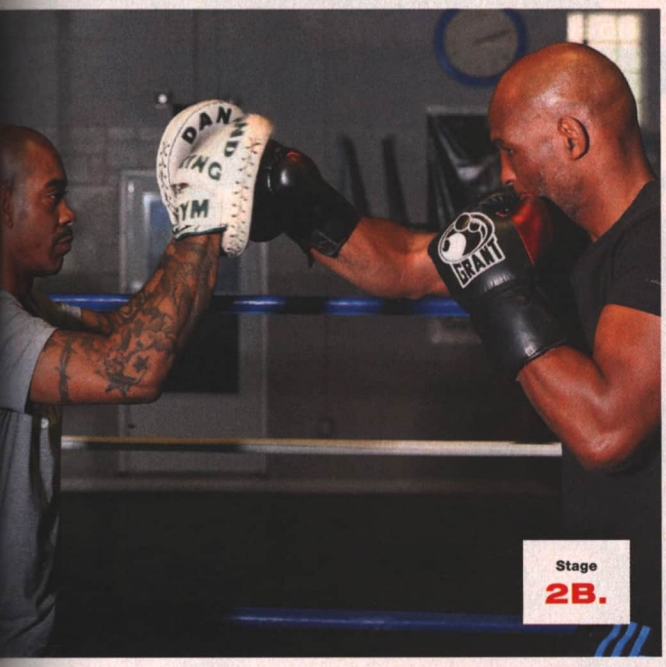
jab. It can be up A, it can be down, it can be sideways. You have to find the pad to hit it B. It can be anywhere the pad man wants to put the pad for you to hit. This builds instinct and accuracy C."

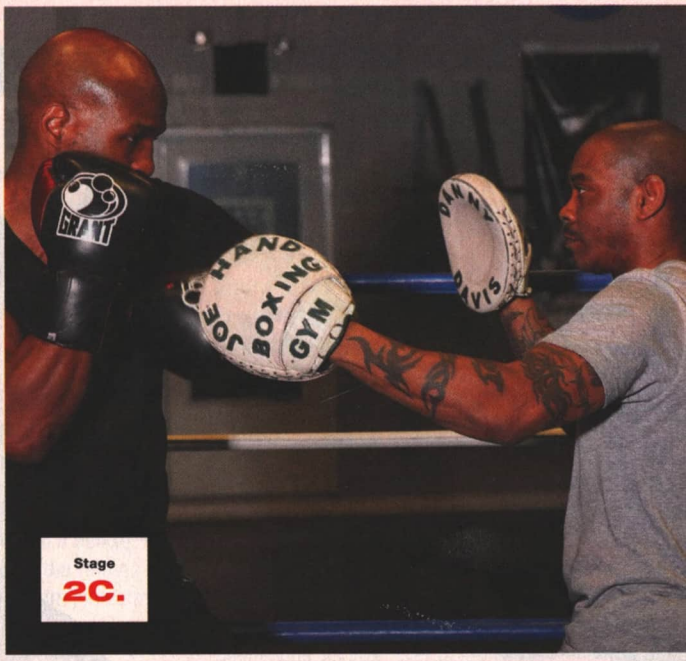
BUILDING COMBINATION ACCURACY

Stage 2. "One-two-three combinations with the pad work involves the jab, right hand, left hook. Again, always start with the basics and build off of that. You can go jab upstairs, right hand down the pike, and then left hook. That one-two-three combination of jab A, right hand B, left hook C sets the tone for any fight. That's the basic combination you want to handle. Start slow, then build up punching speed as you begin to feel more comfortable."

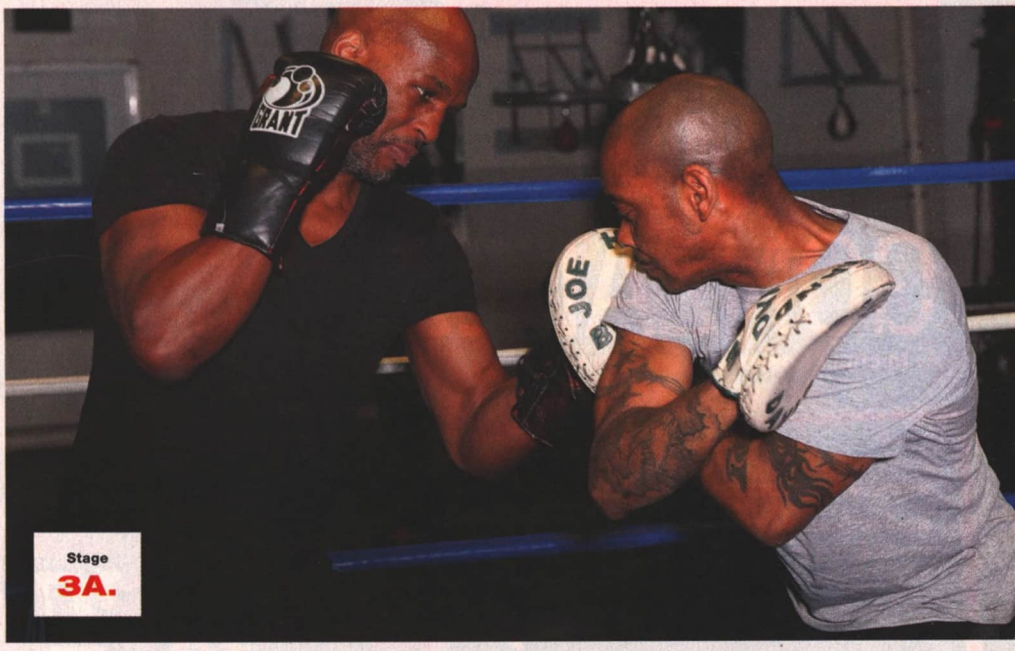
BODY WORK OFF THE PADS

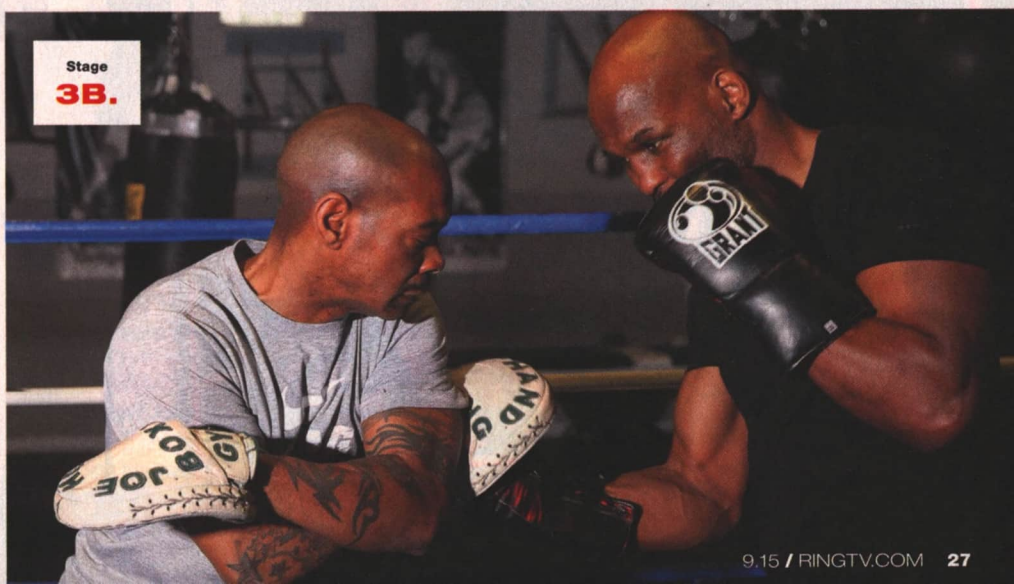
Stage 3. "Body work off the pads is simple. You





kill the body, the head will fall. My priority with the body off the pads is targeting both hands to certain areas of the body. Pad work helps create a target and it gives a fighter an idea how to position his feet, where and how he needs to angle his shoulders A-B and his arm level when throwing a punch. My kidney punch that knocked out Oscar De La Hoya came from pad work." RING



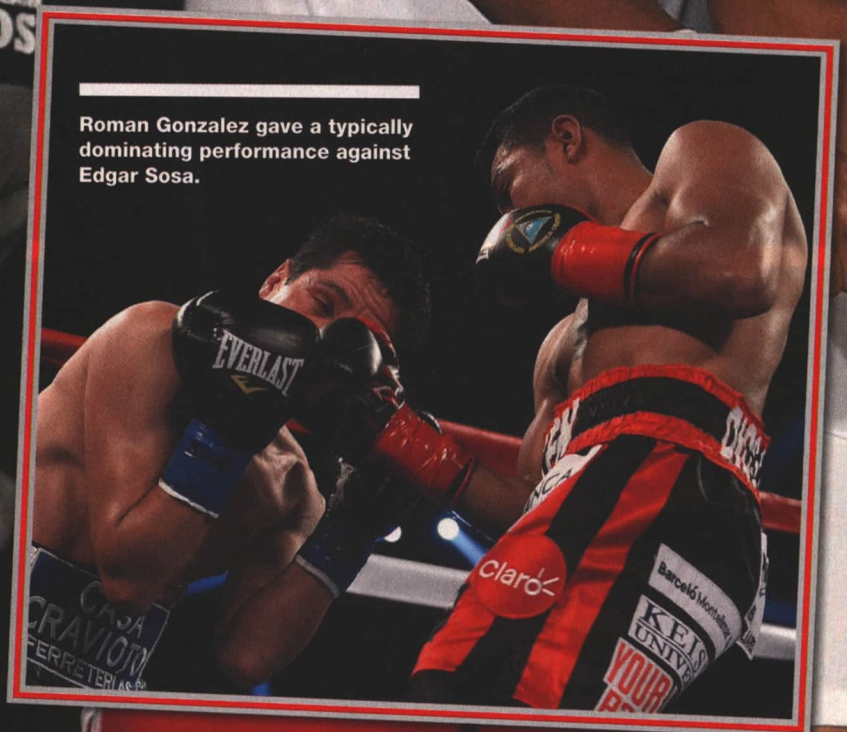


Bernard Hopkins' popular how-to series on boxing fundamentals appears each month in THE RING. The feature includes an audio component this month. To listen to Hopkins giving instruction, just scan the QR code above or go to bit.do/pad-work.

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH

ROMAN GONZALEZ

By **Michael Rosenthal**



Roman Gonzalez gave a typically dominating performance against Edgar Sosa.

Roman Gonzalez's brutal second-round knockout of capable veteran Edgar Sosa on May 16 wasn't surprising to those who have followed Gonzalez's career. The little fighter from Nicaragua is a veritable terror.

And now more people than ever know.

The Gonzalez-Sosa fight took place on the Gennady Golovkin-Willie Monroe Jr. card at the Forum in Inglewood, California, which was televised on HBO, the first time the U.S. network has featured a flyweight fight since 1995.

The telecast reportedly drew a very healthy 1.338 million viewers. And given what those viewers saw, presumably this is just the beginning.

Gonzalez (43-0, 37 knockouts) did what Gonzalez does, methodically stalking his prey, quickly breaking him down and then knocking him out, this time 2:37 into Round 2. Five minutes, 37 seconds of exhilarating carnage.

That makes nine consecutive KOs for the RING and WBC champ against some of the best fighters in and around his weight class.

I wouldn't say Gonzalez stole the show from Golovkin, who stopped Monroe in the sixth round for his 20th straight knockout. I will say two things, though: 1. Sosa is more accomplished than Monroe, which gives Gonzalez's victory more weight. And 2. Gonzalez probably made a bigger splash because he was a relatively unknown quantity going in.

Gonzalez is what fans want, a skillful boxer with crushing power and a menacing killer instinct. No one cares that he weighs around 112 pounds.

POUND FOR POUND: The double bill of Gennady Golovkin's win over Willie Monroe and Roman Gonzalez's two-round dismantling of Edgar Sosa triggered a pound-for-pound shuffle: Gonzalez rose from No. 3 to No. 2, displacing Wladimir Klitschko, and Golovkin climbed from No. 7 to No. 4. Meanwhile, No. 9 Juan Manuel Marquez's 427-week tenure ended after a year with no fights, No. 9 Terence Crawford moved up to fill the gap and top bantamweight Shinsuke Yamanaka came in at No. 10. Then Carl Froch (No. 6 last month) dropped out due to inactivity and No. 10 was filled by Yamanaka's countryman, junior lightweight Takashi Uchiyama.

HEAVYWEIGHTS: It took No. 1 contender Alexander Povetkin a minute and a half to knock Mike Perez (No. 8) out of the ratings. As a result, Cameroon's Carlos Takam joined the list at No. 10.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: Ilunga Makabu (No. 7 last month) beat Thabiso Mchunu (No. 8 at the time) in South Africa. Makabu rose to No. 5 while Mchunu fell to No. 10.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: No change.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Felix Sturm (No. 9 last month) dropped out after losing a split decision to undefeated Russian Fedor Chudinov, who moved in at No. 10. James DeGale gained a title and moved up from No. 4 to No. 3 after beating Andre Dirrell by a unanimous decision. The entire list took a trip north after Froch (No. 1 last month) was removed and unbeaten Liverpudlian Callum Smith took the vacant spot at the bottom.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Now stripped of his belt and mired in legal issues, Jermain Taylor (No. 7 last month) was dropped from the ratings. The list adjusted and heavy-handed Canadian David Lemieux entered at No. 10. Daniel Geale then dropped from No. 4 to No. 8 after being stopped in four rounds by division champion Miguel Cotto.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No change.

WELTERWEIGHTS: Marquez (No. 6 last month) succumbed to inactivity and was dropped. That moved everyone previously below him up a notch and Brooklynite Sadam Ali became the new No. 10. Robert Guerrero (No. 9 last month) didn't look great in a split-decision win over unrated Aaron Martinez and fell off the list. Louisiana's Brad Solomon debuted at No. 10.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: With his fight against Amir Khan at welterweight, Chris Algieri (No. 6 last month) was removed from the ratings and the shift upward made room for 24-year-old Amir Imam at No. 10.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: Raymundo Beltran (No. 1 last month) was removed from the ratings after failing a drug test, allowing Richar Abril (No. 2 last month) to take the top spot. Jorge Linares jumped from No. 5 to No. 2 with an impressive defense of his title against Kevin Mitchell, who stayed put at No. 7. Beltran's departure created an opening at No. 10, which was taken by Ghanaian Richard Commey. Dejan Zlaticanin jumped from No. 9 to No. 6 after stopping Ivan Redkach (unrated) in the fourth round.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: Jomthong Chuwatana left the No. 10 spot after going down in the second round against No. 1 Takashi Uchiyama. Undefeated Frenchman Romain Jacob filled the vacancy. Jacob then moved up a notch after No. 9 Adrian Estrella was removed after being stopped in two rounds by unrated Eden Sonsona. Japanese titleholder Rikki Naito came in at No. 10. Javier Fortuna (No. 6 last month) scored a unanimous decision over Bryan Vasquez (No. 3 last month) and they became Nos. 5 and 6, respectively. Jose Pedraza picked up a vacant title with a landslide victory over unrated Andrey Klimov and was lifted from No. 8 to No. 6.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: Lee Selby (No. 8 last month) took No. 5 Evgeny Gradovich's title with an eight-round technical decision and they switched places.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: No. 6 Kid Galahad was removed after testing positive for a banned substance and the upward shift made room for Las Vegas native Jessie Magdaleno at No. 10.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: Jamie McDonnell (No. 7 last month) won a paper-thin decision against Tomoki Kameda, who stayed put at No. 6 while McDonnell jumped to No. 5. This knocked Malcolm Tunacao (No. 5 last month) down two spaces. The U.K.'s Lee Haskins then replaced Ryosuke Iwasa at No. 10 after stopping him in six rounds.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: No change.

FLYWEIGHTS: Division champion Gonzalez underscored his dominance with his second-round stoppage of Edgar Sosa, who fell from No. 4 to No. 7.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: Ryoichi Taguchi rose from No. 5 to No. 4 after defending his title with an eighth-round KO of unrated Kwanthai Sithmorseng. No. 2 Adrian Hernandez took a fight at 115 pounds and left the ratings. Javier Mendoza's victory over Milan Melindo was premature as a result of a technical decision but he was doing enough to rise from No. 9 to No. 4. Melindo (No. 4 last month) fell to No. 7.

STRAWWEIGHTS: No change.

Miguel Cotto (right) had no trouble retaining his middleweight titles against Daniel Geale.

THE FIGURES UNDER THE FIGHTERS' NAMES INDICATE: WEEKS IN THE RATINGS • COUNTRY • RECORD

HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT UNLIMITED

C WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO
526 • Ukraine • 64-3-0 (53 KOs)

1. ALEXANDER POVETKIN
400 • Russia • 29-1-0 (21 KOs)

2. DEONTAY WILDER
82 • U.S. • 34-0-0 (33 KOs)

3. TYSON FURY
174 • U.K. • 24-0-0 (18 KOs)

4. KUBRAT PULEV
192 • Bulgaria • 20-1-0 (11 KOs)

5. BRYANT JENNINGS
65 • U.S. • 19-1-0 (10 KOs)

6. BERMANE STIVERNE
112 • Canada • 24-2-1 (21 KOs)

7. VYACHESLAV GLAZKOV
66 • Ukraine • 20-0-1 (12 KOs)

8. RUSLAN CHAGAEV
32 • Uzbek. • 33-2-1 (20 KOs)

9. TONY THOMPSON
14 • U.S. • 40-5-0 (27 KOs)

10. CARLOS TAKAM
4 • Cameroon • 32-2-1 (25 KOs)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 200 LBS

C YOAN PABLO HERNANDEZ
194 • Cuba • 29-1-0 (14 KOs)

1. MARCO HUCK
171 • Germany • 38-2-1 (26 KOs)

2. GRIGORY DROZD
89 • Russia • 40-1-0 (28 KOs)

3. DENIS LEBEDEV
281 • Russia • 27-2-0 (20 KOs)

4. KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK
523 • Poland • 49-3-1 (35 KOs)

5. ILUNGA MAKABU
101 • Congo • 19-1-0 (18 KOs)

6. FIRAT ARSLAN
137 • Germany • 35-8-2 (21 KOs)

7. VICTOR RAMIREZ
10 • Argentina • 22-2-0 (17 KOs)

8. YOURI KALENGA
52 • Congo • 21-2-0 (14 KOs)

9. DMITRY KUDRYASHOV
10 • Russia • 18-0-0 (18 KOs)

10. THABISO MCHUNU
87 • S. Africa • 16-2-0 (11 KOs)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 175 LBS

C ADONIS STEVENSON
106 • Canada • 26-1-0 (21 KOs)

1. SERGEY KOVALEV
126 • Russia • 27-0-1 (24 KOs)

2. BERNARD HOPKINS
472 • U.S. • 55-7-2 (32 KOs)

3. JEAN PASCAL
101 • Canada • 29-3-1 (17 KOs)

4. JUERGEN BRAEHMER
155 • Germany • 46-2-0 (34 KOs)

5. ELEIDER ALVAREZ
66 • Colombia • 17-0-0 (10 KOs)

6. ISAAC CHILEMBA
164 • Malawi • 24-2-2 (10 KOs)

7. ARTUR BETERBIEV
27 • Russia • 9-0-0 (9 KOs)

8. ANDRZEJ FONFARA
57 • Poland • 27-3-0 (16 KOs)

9. NADJIB MOHAMMEDI
39 • France • 37-3-0 (23 KOs)

10. THOMAS OOSTHUIZEN
11 • S. Africa • 25-0-2 (14 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. ARTHUR ABRAHAM
297 • Armenia • 42-4-0 (28 KOs)

2. JAMES DEGALE
106 • U.K. • 21-1-0 (14 KOs)

3. GEORGE GROVES
184 • U.K. • 21-2-0 (16 KOs)

4. ROBERT STIEGLITZ
305 • Russia • 47-4-1 (27 KOs)

5. GILBERTO RAMIREZ
49 • Mexico • 31-0-0 (24 KOs)

6. ANDRE DIRRELL
42 • U.S. • 24-2-0 (16 KOs)

7. BADOU JACK
8 • Sweden • 19-1-1 (12 KOs)

8. ANTHONY DIRRELL
44 • U.S. • 27-1-1 (22 KOs)

9. FEDOR CHUDINOV
6 • Russia • 13-0-0 (10 KOs)

10. CALLUM SMITH
2 • U.K. • 16-0-0 (12 KOs)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 LBS

C MIGUEL COTTO
54 • P.R. • 40-4-0 (33 KOs)

1. GENNADY GOLOVKIN
184 • Kaz. • 33-0-0 (30 KOs)

2. ANDY LEE
27 • Ireland • 34-2-1 (24 KOs)

3. PETER QUILLIN
159 • U.S. • 31-0-1 (22 KOs)

4. HASSAN N'DAM
74 • Cameroon • 31-1-0 (18 KOs)

5. MARTIN MURRAY
185 • U.K. • 29-2-1 (12 KOs)

6. BILLY JOE SAUNDERS
29 • U.K. • 21-0-0 (11 KOs)

7. DANIEL JACOBS
27 • U.S. • 29-1-0 (26 KOs)

8. DANIEL GEALE
314 • Australia • 31-4-0 (16 KOs)

9. CHRIS EUBANK JR.
10 • U.K. • 19-1-0 (14 KOs)

10. DAVID LEMIEUX
3 • Canada • 33-2-0 (31 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 LBS

C FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.
163 • U.S. • 48-0-0 (26 KOs)

1. CANELO ALVAREZ
240 • Mexico • 45-1-1 (32 KOs)

2. ERISLANDY LARA
207 • Cuba • 21-2-2 (12 KOs)

3. AUSTIN TROUT
159 • U.S. • 29-2-0 (16 KOs)

4. DEMETRIUS ANDRADE
114 • U.S. • 21-0-0 (14 KOs)

5. JERMELL CHARLO
84 • U.S. • 26-0-0 (11 KOs)

6. VANES MARTIROSYAN
289 • U.S. • 35-2-1 (21 KOs)

7. CORNELIUS BUNDRAGE
36 • U.S. • 34-5-0 (19 KOs)

8. JERMALL CHARLO
53 • U.S. • 21-0-0 (16 KOs)

9. JULIAN WILLIAMS
27 • U.S. • 20-0-1 (12 KOs)

10. CARLOS MOLINA
207 • Mexico • 22-6-2 (6 KOs)

WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 LBS

C FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.
196 • U.S. • 48-0-0 (26 KOs)

1. KELL BROOK
217 • U.K. • 35-0-0 (24 KOs)

2. MANNY PACQUIAO
293 • Phil. • 57-6-2 (38 KOs)

3. AMIR KHAN
59 • U.K. • 31-3-0 (19 KOs)

4. TIM BRADLEY
157 • U.S. • 31-1-1 (12 KOs)

5. KEITH THURMAN
119 • U.S. • 25-0-0 (21 KOs)

6. SHAWN PORTER
80 • U.S. • 25-1-1 (16 KOs)

7. MARCOS MAIDANA
79 • Argentina • 35-5-0 (31 KOs)

8. DIEGO CHAVES
27 • Argentina • 23-2-1 (19 KOs)

9. SADAM ALI
5 • U.S. • 22-0-0 (13 KOs)

10. BRAD SOLOMON
2 • U.S. • 25-0-0 (9 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 LBS

C DANNY GARCIA
219 • U.S. • 30-0-0 (17 KOs)

1. LUCAS MATTHYSSE
219 • Argentina • 37-3-0 (34 KOs)

2. LAMONT PETERSON
121 • U.S. • 33-3-1 (17 KOs)

3. RUSLAN PROVODNIKOV
132 • Russia • 24-4-0 (17 KOs)

4. ADRIEN BRONER
59 • U.S. • 30-1-0 (22 KOs)

5. TERENCE CRAWFORD
9 • U.S. • 26-0-0 (18 KOs)

6. JESSIE VARGAS
62 • U.S. • 26-0-0 (9 KOs)

7. VIKTOR POSTOL
96 • Ukraine • 27-0-0 (11 KOs)

8. MAURICIO HERRERA
21 • U.S. • 21-5-0 (7 KOs)

9. JOSE BENAVIDEZ
10 • U.S. • 23-0-0 (16 KOs)

10. AMIR IMAM
5 • U.S. • 17-0-0 (14 KOs)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. RICHAR ABRIL
39 • Cuba • 19-3-1 (8 KOs)

2. JORGE LINARES
67 • Venezuela • 39-3-0 (26 KOs)

3. MICKEY BEY
40 • U.S. • 21-1-1 (10 KOs)

4. MIGUEL VAZQUEZ
254 • Mexico • 35-4-0 (13 KOs)

5. SHARIF BOGERE
33 • Uganda • 26-1-0 (18 KOs)

6. DEJAN ZLATICANIN
10 • Montenegro • 21-0-0 (14 KOs)

7. DIERRY JEAN
29 • Canada • 28-1-0 (20 KOs)

8. KEVIN MITCHELL
20 • U.K. • 39-3-0 (29 KOs)

9. DENIS SHAFIKOV
10 • Russia • 35-1-1 (19 KOs)

10. RICHARD COMMEY
3 • Ghana • 22-0-0 (20 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. TAKASHI UCHIYAMA
284 • Japan • 23-0-1 (19 KOs)

2. TAKASHI MIURA
115 • Japan • 29-2-2 (22 KOs)

3. ROMAN MARTINEZ
354 • P.R. • 29-2-2 (17 KOs)

4. FRANCISCO VARGAS
49 • Mexico • 22-0-1 (16 KOs)

5. JAVIER FORTUNA
33 • Dom. Rep. • 28-0-1 (20 KOs)

6. JOSE PEDRAZA
22 • P.R. • 20-0-0 (12 KOs)

7. BRYAN VASQUEZ
27 • Costa Rica • 34-2-0 (18 KOs)

8. ORLANDO SALIDO
39 • Mexico • 42-13 -2 (29 KOs)

9. ROMAIN JACOB
6 • France • 23-0-0 (7 KOs)

10. RIKKI NAITO
5 • Japan • 13-0-0 (5 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. NICHOLAS WALTERS
132 • Jamaica • 26-0-0 (21 KOs)

2. VASYL LOMACHENKO
59 • Ukraine • 4-1-0 (2 KO)

3. GARY RUSSELL JR.
12 • U.S. • 26-1-0 (15 KOs)

4. ABNER MARES
111 • Mexico • 29-1-1 (15 KOs)

5. LEE SELBY
66 • U.K. • 21-1-0 (8 KOs)

6. JHONNY GONZALEZ
220 • Mexico • 57-9-0 (48 KOs)

7. SIMPIWE VETYEKA
80 • S. Africa • 27-3-0 (16 KOs)

8. EVGENY GRADOVICH
120 • Russia • 19-1-1 (9 KOs)

9. JESUS CUELLAR
36 • Argentina • 27-1-0 (21 KOs)

10. JAYSON VELEZ
29 • P.R. • 23-0-1 (16 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 LBS

C GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX
241 • Cuba • 15-0-0 (10 KOs)

1. CARL FRAMPTON
143 • U.K. • 20-0-0 (14 KOs)

2. LEO SANTA CRUZ
111 • U.S. • 30-0-1 (17 KOs)

3. SCOTT QUIGG
134 • U.K. • 30-0-2 (22 KOs)

4. NONITO DONAIRE
12 • Phil. • 34-3-0 (22 KOs)

5. GENESIS SERVANIA
66 • Phil. • 26-0-0 (11 KOs)

6. ANDRES GUTIERREZ
39 • Mexico • 31-0-1 (22 KOs)

7. SHINGO WAKE
30 • Japan • 19-4-2 (11 KOs)

8. REY VARGAS
27 • Mexico • 24-0-0 (20 KOs)

9. ALBERT PAGARA
24 • Phil. • 23-0-0 (16 KOs)

10. JESSIE MAGDALENO
1 • U.S. • 21-0-0 (15 KOs)

HOW OUR RATINGS ARE COMPILED

Championship vacancies can be filled in the following two ways: 1. THE RING's Nos. 1 and 2 contenders fight one another; 2. If the Nos. 1 and 2 contenders chose not to fight one another and either of them fights No. 3, No. 4 or No. 5, the winner may be awarded THE RING belt if the Editorial Board deems the contenders worthy.

A champion can lose his belt in six situations: 1. The Champion loses a fight in the weight class in which he is champion; 2. The Champion moves to another weight class; 3. The Champion does not schedule a fight in any weight class for 18 months; 4. The Champion does not schedule a fight at his championship weight for 18 months (even if he fights at another weight); 5. The Champion does not schedule a fight with a Top-5 contender from any weight class for two years; 6. The Champion retires.

THE RING Ratings Chairman Chuck Giampa considers input from the Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world but has final say on all changes. That applies to both the pound-for-pound and divisional ratings.

Records provided by boxrec.com

BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. **SHINSUKE YAMANAKA**
189 • Japan • 23-0-2 (17 KOs)
2. **JUAN CARLOS PAYANO**
38 • Dom. Rep. • 16-0-0 (8 KOs)
3. **ANSELMO MORENO**
377 • Panama • 35-3-1 (12 KOs)
4. **KOKI KAMEDA**
235 • Japan • 33-1-0 (18 KOs)
5. **JAMIE MCDONNELL**
111 • U.K. • 26-2-1 (12 KOs)
6. **TOMOKI KAMEDA**
98 • Japan • 31-1-0 (19 KOs)
7. **MALCOLM TUNACAO**
230 • Phil. • 35-3-3 (20 KOs)
8. **RANDY CABALLERO**
34 • U.S. • 22-0-0 (13 KOs)
9. **KIKO MARTINEZ**
27 • Spain • 32-5-0 (24 KOs)
10. **LEE HASKINS**
1 • U.K. • 32-3-0 (14 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. **NAOYA INOUE**
24 • Japan • 8-0-0 (7 KOs)
2. **CARLOS CUADRAS**
162 • Mexico • 32-0-1 (25 KOs)
3. **SRISAKET SOR RUNGVISAI**
111 • Thailand • 34-4-1 (31 KOs)
4. **ZOLANI TETE**
81 • S. Africa • 20-3-0 (17 KOs)
5. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
267 • Argentina • 43-2-2 (23 KOs)
6. **ARTHUR VILLANUEVA**
113 • Phil. • 27-0-0 (14 KOs)
7. **OLEYDONG SITHSAMERCHAI**
142 • Thailand • 56-1-1 (21 KOs)
8. **FELIPE ORUCUTA**
108 • Mexico • 30-3-0 (25 KOs)
9. **MCJOE ARROYO**
53 • P.R. • 16-0-0 (8 KOs)
10. **DAVID SANCHEZ**
18 • Mexico • 28-2-2 (22 KOs)

FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 LBS

C ROMAN GONZALEZ
84 • Nicaragua • 43-0-0 (37 KOs)

1. **JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA**
115 • Mexico • 32-2-0 (23 KOs)
2. **AMNAT RUENROENG**
58 • Thailand • 15-0-0 (5 KOs)
3. **BRIAN VILORIA**
206 • U.S. • 35-4-0 (21 KOs)
4. **KAZUTO IOKA**
39 • Japan • 17-1-0 (10 KOs)
5. **JUAN CARLOS REVECO**
194 • Argentina • 35-2-0 (19 KOs)
6. **MORUTI MTHALANE**
66 • S. Africa • 31-2-0 (20 KOs)
7. **EDGAR SOSA**
162 • Mexico • 51-9-0 (30 KOs)
8. **GIOVANI SEGURA**
85 • Mexico • 32-4-1 (28 KOs)
9. **MCWILLIAMS ARROYO**
41 • P.R. • 16-2-0 (14 KOs)
10. **JOHNRIEL CASIMERO**
27 • Phil. • 21-2-0 (13 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 LBS

C DONNIE NIETES
193 • Phil. • 35-1-4 (21 KOs)

1. **PEDRO GUEVARA**
116 • Mexico • 25-1-1 (17 KOs)
2. **FELIX ALVARADO**
118 • Nicaragua • 20-2-0 (17 KOs)
3. **RYOICHI TAGUCHI**
27 • Japan • 22-2-1 (9 KOs)
4. **JAVIER MENDOZA**
10 • Mexico • 24-2-1 (19 KOs)
5. **RANDY PETALCORIN**
58 • Phil. • 23-1-1 (18 KOs)
6. **RAUL GARCIA**
24 • Mexico • 36-3-1 (22 KOs)
7. **MILAN MELINDO**
31 • Phil. • 32-2-0 (12 KOs)
8. **ALBERTO ROSSEL**
112 • Peru • 33-9-0 (13 KOs)
9. **REY LORETO**
10 • Phil. • 20-13-0 (12 KOs)
10. **FRANCISCO RODRIGUEZ**
3 • Mexico • 17-2-1 (11 KOs)

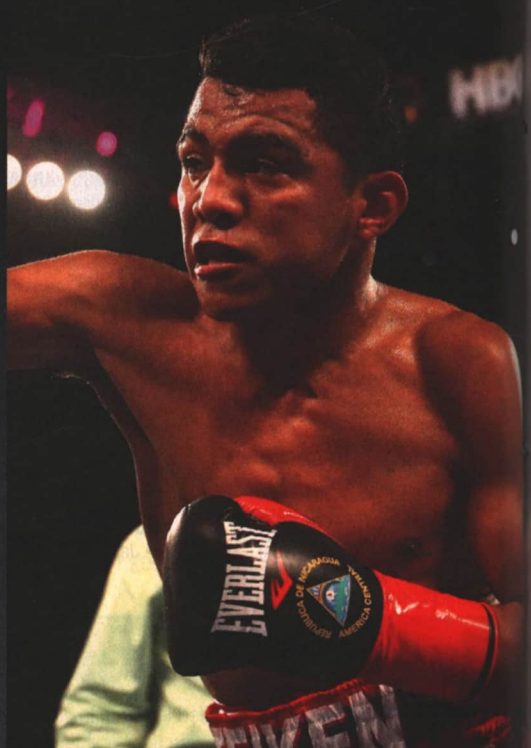
STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. **HEKKIE BUDLER**
143 • S. Africa • 28-1-0 (9 KOs)
2. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
116 • Japan • 29-7-0 (11 KOs)
3. **WANHENG MENAYOTHIN**
209 • Thailand • 38-0-0 (13 KOs)
4. **KOSEI TANAKA**
34 • Japan • 5-0-0 (2 KOs)
5. **KNOCKOUT CP FRESHMART**
37 • Thailand • 10-0-0 (5 KOs)
6. **CARLOS BUITRAGO**
140 • Nicaragua • 28-1-1 (16 KOs)
7. **RYUJI HARA**
94 • Japan • 19-1-0 (11 KOs)
8. **XIONG ZHAO ZHONG**
31 • China • 25-6-1 (14 KOs)
9. **DENVER CUELLO**
31 • Phil. • 35-5-6 (23 KOs)
10. **OSWALDO NOVOA**
71 • Mexico • 14-5-2 (9 KOs)

POUND FOR POUND

1. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.**
196 • U.S. • 48-0-0 (26 KOs)
2. **ROMAN GONZALEZ**
54 • Nicaragua • 43-0-0 (37 KOs)
3. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO**
254 • Ukraine • 64-3-0 (53 KOs)
4. **GENNADY GOLOVKIN**
18 • Kaz. • 33-0-0 (30 KOs)
5. **GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX**
95 • Cuba • 15-0-0 (10 KOs)
6. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
603 • Phil. • 57-6-2 (38 KOs)
7. **SERGEY KOVALEV**
14 • Russia • 27-0-1 (24 KOs)
8. **TERENCE CRAWFORD**
7 • U.S. • 26-0-0 (18 KOs)
9. **SHINSUKE YAMANAKA**
5 • Japan • 23-0-2 (17 KOs)
10. **TAKASHI UCHIYAMA**
2 • Japan • 23-0-1 (19 KOs)



THE RING POLICY ON RATED BOXERS WHO TEST POSITIVE FOR PERFORMANCE-ENHANCING DRUGS

THE RING will remove from its ratings any rated boxer — including a champion — if such boxer at some point undergoes drug testing (Olympic-style or otherwise) and that boxer tests positive for a performance-enhancing drug.

In the event that a boxer has undergone testing in which the boxer provides two samples ("A" and "B") and the boxer's "A" and subsequent "B" samples test positive for a performance-enhancing drug or if his "A" sample tests positive and he waives his right to have the "B" sample tested then the boxer shall immediately be removed from the ratings.

A boxer whose "A" sample tested positive and is awaiting the results of his "B" sample will not be allowed to fight for a championship or rise in the ratings.

A boxer who is removed because of a positive test will have the opportunity to earn his way back into the ratings after any suspension period is completed.

A boxer who is dropped also may be reinstated if the testing agency subsequently reverses its decision or a court of competent jurisdiction finds that the test result was invalid.

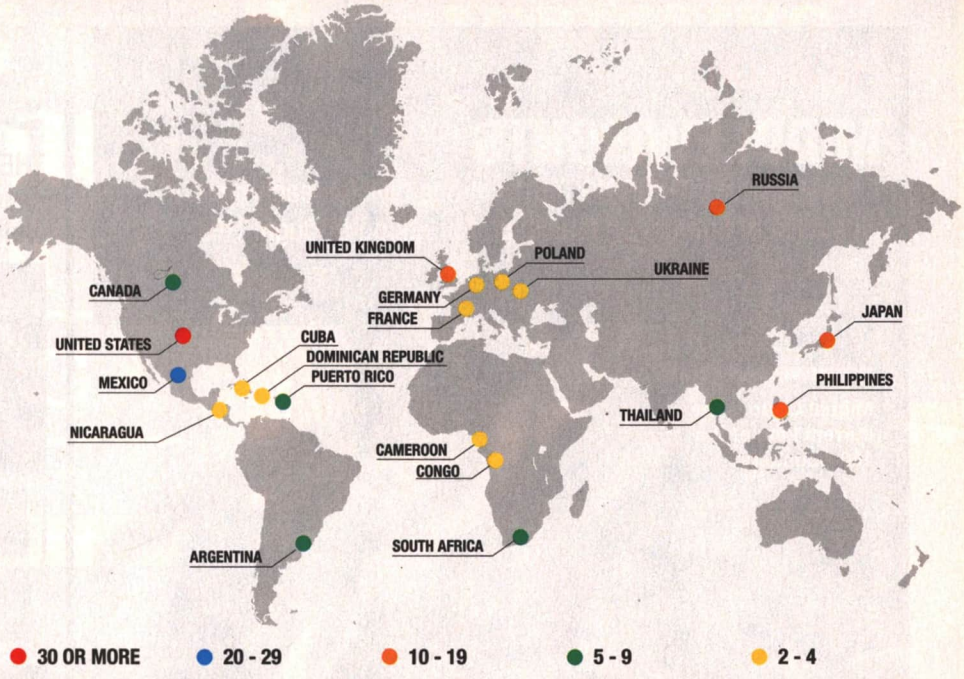
RATED FIGHTERS BY COUNTRY

UNITED STATES	36*	▲ 1
MEXICO	21	▼ 3
UNITED KINGDOM	15	
JAPAN	13	
PHILIPPINES	12	
RUSSIA	11	▲ 1
ARGENTINA	7	
PUERTO RICO	6	
SOUTH AFRICA	6	
CANADA	5	▲ 1
THAILAND	5	▼ 1
CUBA	4	▼ 1
UKRAINE	4	
GERMANY	3	▼ 1
NICARAGUA	3	
CAMEROON	2	▲ 1
CONGO	2	
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	2	
FRANCE	2	▲ 1
POLAND	2	
ARMENIA	1	
AUSTRALIA	1	
BULGARIA	1	
CHINA	1	
COLOMBIA	1	
COSTA RICA	1	
GHANA	1	NEW
IRELAND	1	
JAMAICA	1	
KAZAKHSTAN	1	
MALAWI	1	
MONTENEGRO	1	
PANAMA	1	
PERU	1	
SPAIN	1	
SWEDEN	1	
UGANDA	1	
UZBEKISTAN	1	
VENEZUELA	1	

Countries out (from last month): *None.*

Countries in: *Ghana.*

** Includes two ratings for Floyd Mayweather Jr. (junior middleweight and welterweight).*



MEXICO VS. U.K. VS. JAPAN

It would've seemed inconceivable at the beginning of the year that Mexico's No. 2 position in THE RING's ratings could be threatened. After all, Mexico had 32 rated fighters in January, 18 more than No. 3 U.K. and 21 more than No. 4 Japan. Now it seems anything is possible. Here's a look at the numbers:

DIVISION	MEXICO	U.K.	JAPAN
HEAVYWEIGHTS	0	1	0
CRUISERWEIGHTS	0	0	0
LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS	0	0	0
SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS	1	3	0
MIDDLEWEIGHTS	0	3	0
JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS	2	0	0
WELTERWEIGHTS	0	2	0
JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS	0	0	0
LIGHTWEIGHTS	1	1	0
JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS	2	0	3
FEATHERWEIGHTS	2	1	0
JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS	2	2	1
BANTAMWEIGHTS	0	2	3
JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS	3	0	1
FLYWEIGHTS	3	0	1
JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS	4	0	1
STRAWWEIGHTS	1	0	3
TOTAL	21	15	13

KO ARTISTS

A number of young fighters who have recently cracked the RING Ratings evidently can crack, which prompted us to revisit the rated boxers with the highest knockout percentages (knockouts divided by total fights). Here is the Top 10 (in order of percentage):

100.0 DMITRY KUDRYASHOV »
CRUISERWEIGHT (18-0, 18 KOS)

100.0 ARTUR BETERBIEV
LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT (9-0, 9 KOS)

97.1 DEONTAY WILDER
HEAVYWEIGHT (34-0, 33 KOS)

90.9 GENNADY GOLOVKIN
MIDDLEWEIGHT (33-0, 30 KOS)

90.9 RICHARD COMMEY
LIGHTWEIGHT (22-0, 20 KOS)

90.0 ILUNGA MAKABU
CRUISERWEIGHT (19-1, 18 KOS)

88.6 DAVID LEMIEUX
MIDDLEWEIGHT (33-2, 31 KOS)

87.5 NAOYA INOUE
JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHT (8-0, 7 KOS)

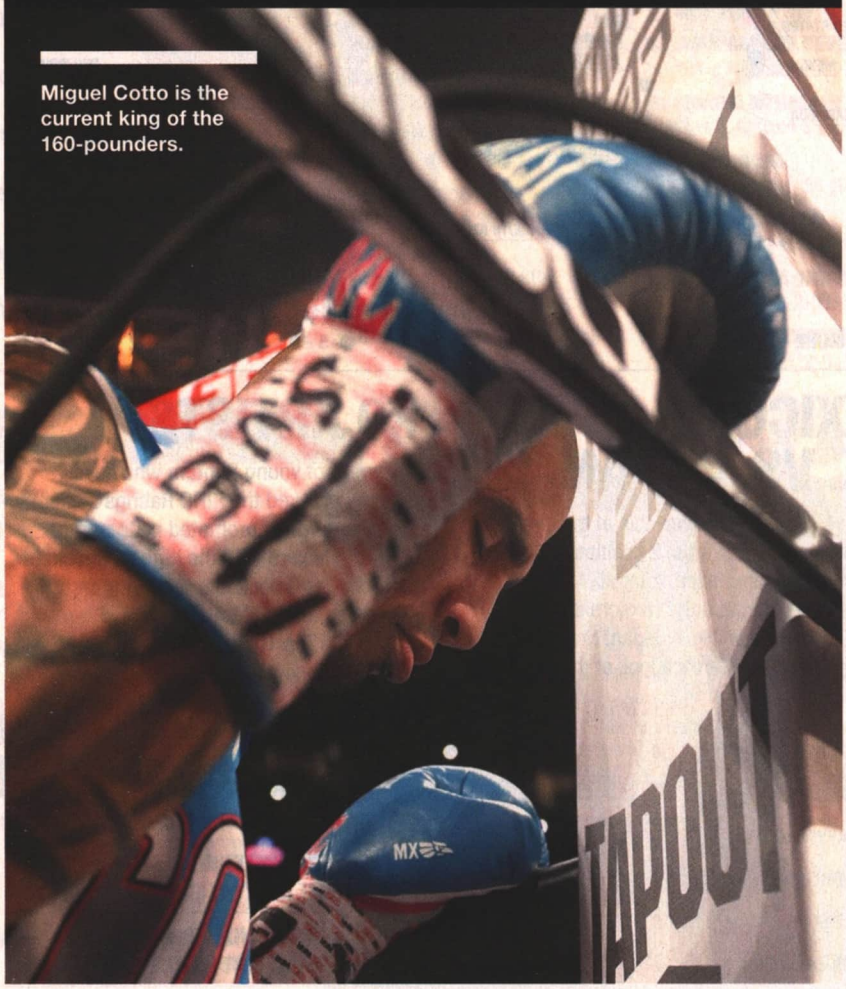
86.7 DANIEL JACOBS
MIDDLEWEIGHT (29-1, 26 KOS)

86.0 ROMAN GONZALEZ
FLYWEIGHT (43-0, 37 KOS)

FOCUS ON . . .

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

A breakdown of THE RING Top 10 in one division each month, plus a list of fighters on the cusp of breaking through. This month: the 160-pounders.



Miguel Cotto is the current king of the 160-pounders.

MOST WEEKS RATED: DANIEL GEALE **314**

FEWEST WEEKS RATED: DAVID LEMIEUX **3**

OLDEST: MIGUEL COTTO **34**

YOUNGEST: CHRIS EUBANK JR. **25**

MOST FIGHTS: COTTO **44**

FEWEST FIGHTS: EUBANK **20**

HIGHEST WINNING PERCENTAGE: GENNADY GOLOVKIN AND BILLY JOE SAUNDERS **100 PERCENT**

LOWEST WINNING PERCENTAGE: GEALE **88.6 PERCENT**

MOST KOS: COTTO **33**

FEWEST KOS: SAUNDERS **11**

LONGEST CURRENT WINNING STREAK: GOLOVKIN **33 FIGHTS**

ON THE POUND-FOR-POUND LIST: GOLOVKIN **(NO. 4)**

TITLEHOLDERS IN THE TOP 10: COTTO **(RING, WBC),** GOLOVKIN **(WBA),** ANDY LEE **(WBO)**

ON THE CUSP (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER): HUGO CENTENO, JORGE SEBASTIAN HEILAND, SERGIO MORA, MARTIN MURRAY AND MICHEL SORO

OLD SCHOOL 8

THE RING staff members' current champions in the original eight weight classes.

Shinsuke Yamanaka

MICHAEL ROSENTHAL RING MAGAZINE EDITOR

HEAVYWEIGHT: WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO
LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT: SERGEY KOVALEV
MIDDLEWEIGHT: GENNADY GOLOVKIN
WELTERWEIGHT: FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.
LIGHTWEIGHT: TAKASHI UCHIYAMA
FEATHERWEIGHT: GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX
BANTAMWEIGHT: SHINSUKE YAMANAKA
FLYWEIGHT: ROMAN GONZALEZ

DOUG FISCHER RINGTV.COM EDITOR

HEAVYWEIGHT: WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO
LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT: SERGEY KOVALEV
MIDDLEWEIGHT: GENNADY GOLOVKIN
WELTERWEIGHT: FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.
LIGHTWEIGHT: TAKASHI UCHIYAMA
FEATHERWEIGHT: VASYL LOMACHENKO
BANTAMWEIGHT: SHINSUKE YAMANAKA
FLYWEIGHT: ROMAN GONZALEZ

BRIAN HARTY RING MAGAZINE MANAGING EDITOR

HEAVYWEIGHT: WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO
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FEATHERWEIGHT: GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX
BANTAMWEIGHT: SHINSUKE YAMANAKA
FLYWEIGHT: ROMAN GONZALEZ

***Note:** This is how the weights break down: Heavyweight includes cruiserweight, light heavyweight includes super middleweight, all divisions middleweight through flyweight include the "junior" versions, and flyweight also includes strawweight.*

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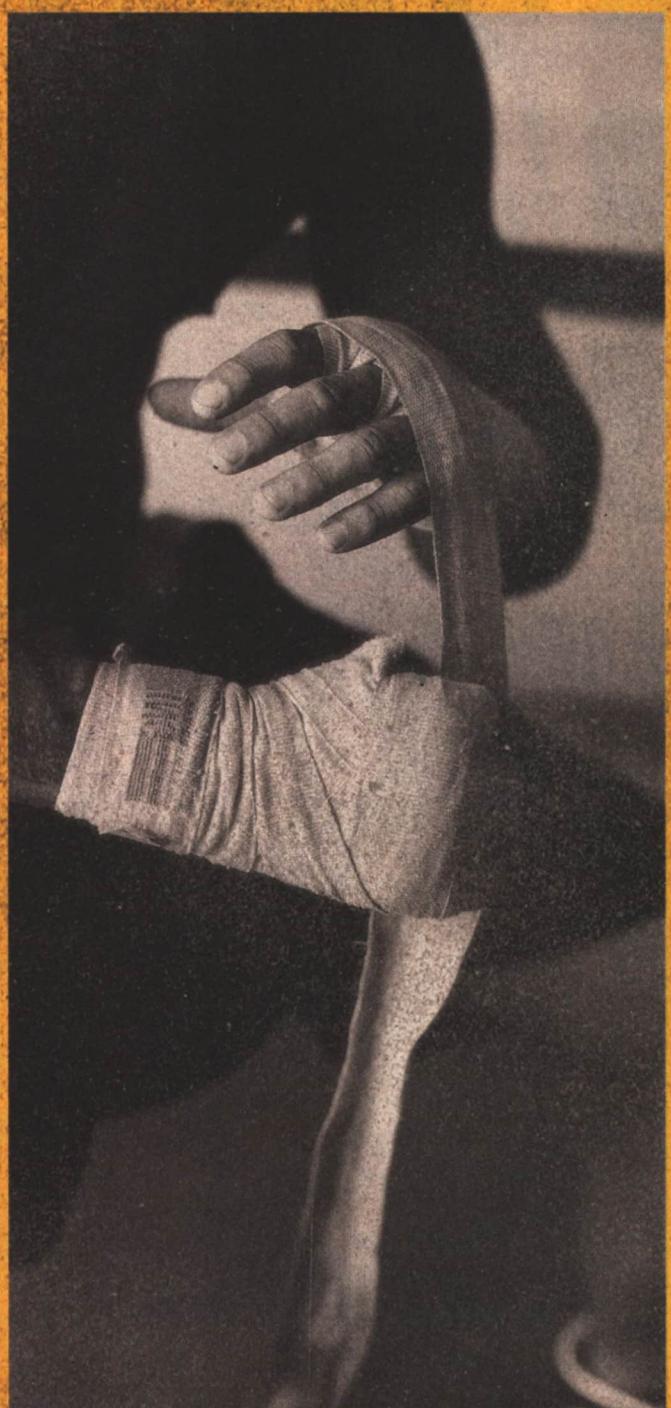

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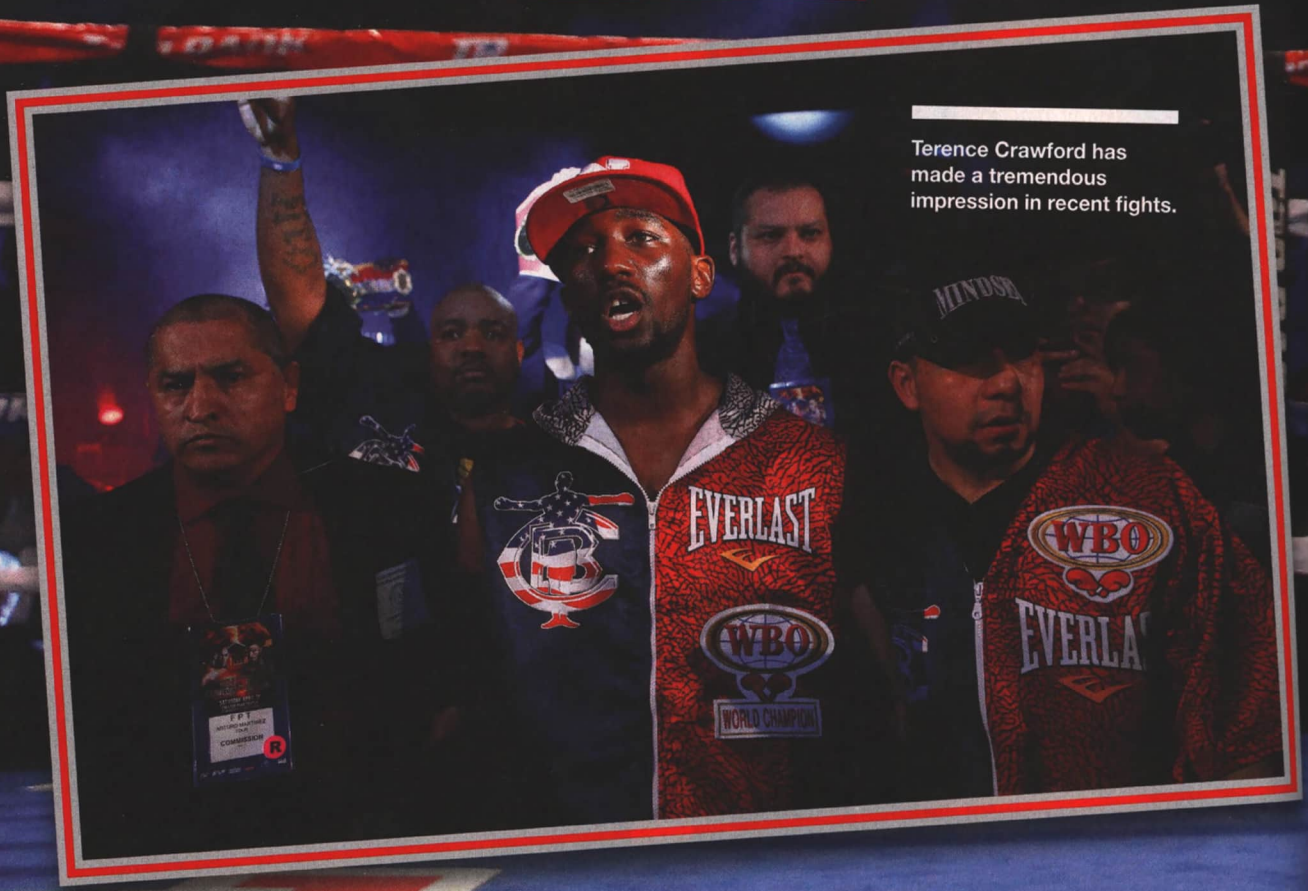
CHAMPION OF THE WORLD

FAST-RISING **TERENCE CRAWFORD** BATTLED OUT OF A TOUGH ENVIRONMENT. NOW HE'S HELPING OTHERS DO THE SAME

By **Ron Borges**



Terence Crawford has made a tremendous impression in recent fights.

In boxing, as in life, it is better to give than to receive. Few people seem to follow that tenet more closely than Terence Crawford. And he has the empty suitcase to prove it.

Crawford is one of the fastest rising stars in boxing, an undefeated two-division world champion who presently holds the WBO junior welterweight title and is on the edge of most pound-for-pound Top 10 rankings. He is also widely viewed as the heir apparent to Manny Pacquiao as promoter Bob Arum's top draw, although he may in the end have to entertain some giving and receiving directly with Pacquiao for that to happen.

Crawford would welcome that but it will be a while, Pacquiao having undergone rotator-cuff surgery that will sideline him for at least nine months following his not-so-close encounter with Floyd Mayweather Jr. in May. In the interim, Crawford will not be on hold. He is set to return to his hometown of Omaha in October to defend his title against what he and Arum hope will be a signature opponent. But before he does he scheduled some giving of a more worldly note. On June 1 he left for his second trip to Uganda and Rwanda alongside an old friend who reconnected with him because of boxing and through that has introduced him to a far larger world than the cloistered one inside the ring.

When Jamie Nollette learned of her former fourth-grade student's smashing success in boxing, she decided to reach out to the boy she once knew at Skinner Magnet School in north Omaha, a raw piece of real estate where life can be tough and the residents tougher. People there have known difficult times and Crawford was no exception. But he discovered two things there that would change his life: boxing and a teacher with dreams of her own.

As is often the case with prize fighters, the fighting began long before

Crawford found boxing. So, too, did his relationship with Nollette, who eventually left teaching and Omaha for a life dedicated to charitable works in Arizona and in some of the most troubled parts of the world. After a life-changing visit to Africa, she co-founded an organization called Pipeline Worldwide which, among other things, works to bring clean water to places that have too little of it while also supporting the work of people like Sister Rosemary Nyirumbe, one of Time magazine's 100 most influential people in the world in 2014 for her work with young women abducted, abused and forced into Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army as child soldiers in Uganda.

When Crawford learned of the work his former teacher was involved with, he asked if he could accompany her on one of Pipeline's visits to Uganda. That's how he ended up with that empty suitcase a year ago and also how he put Sister Rosemary into "training" for a fight with Stephen Colbert, the star of Comedy Central's "The Colbert Report" and the replacement for longtime late-night TV host David Letterman beginning in September.

What Crawford saw in Africa were people like himself, striving for success against long odds yet grateful for what little they had. Before he returned to Omaha they had a few more things than they expected. They had everything Terence Crawford had brought with him but the clothes on his back.

"I always wanted to go to Africa," Crawford said just before departing on his second 12-day trip. "It's a really beautiful place. They have some big problems but there are a lot of problems everywhere in the world.

"The people I met all had a good heart. We gave the kids small things, like balloons, and it was like we gave them the world. I just thought it would be nice and courteous to give up the clothes and shoes I had. They needed them more than I needed them."

Crawford's knockout of Yuriorkis Gamboa was his breakout victory.

Crawford actually did more than that. He promised some of his new friends he'd be back. As he did, he saw in their eyes the same thing he tries to create in his opponent's eyes. He saw doubt.

"They looked at me like, 'A lot of people say that,'" Crawford said. "I wanted to show them I was different. I wanted to be able to say I came back. Who knows what we can accomplish? We're just beginning. Who knows what tomorrow brings?"

Certainly one thing Sister Rosemary never expected to receive was a boxing lesson from a world champion but that's exactly what she got from Crawford after he saw a video of the no-nonsense nun's television appearance on "The Colbert Report." Colbert's TV persona was that of a faux conservative talk-show host and so he played up the part, at one point

asking Sister Rosemary why people in the United States should care about problems so far away when there are plenty to solve here.

To that the good sister said, "I'll jab you, Colbert!" and then shot a quick jab in his direction. She later challenged him to come to Africa and take her on. Crawford may not know how to bring clean water to the surface but he knew how to prepare for a fight. So as a joke Sister Rosemary and Crawford made a video while he was in Uganda with him training her by having her chase a chicken to develop foot work, lift a 50-pound water canteen and hook off the jab while hitting his mitts.

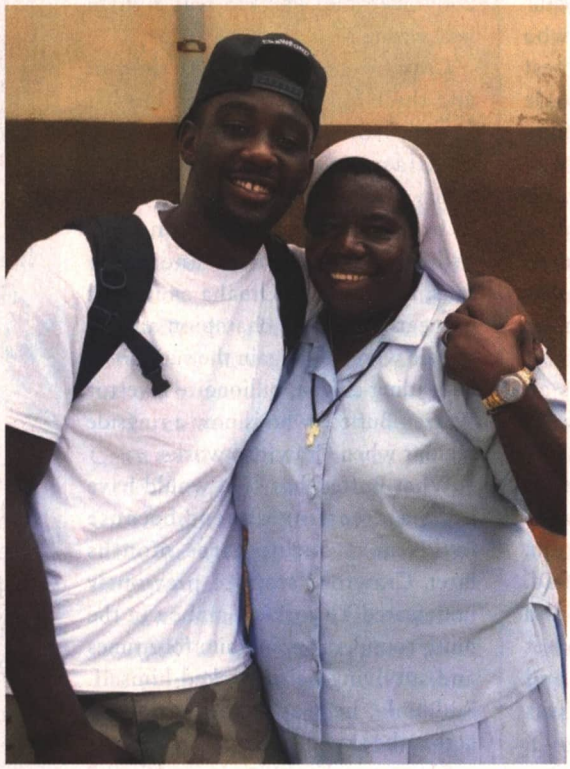
Sister Rosemary looked pretty good, ending the video by again challenging Colbert to come and get jabbed by her. Crawford still laughs at the memory of a comic interlude in the midst of a daily human crisis.

"We thought it would make a funny little video," Crawford said. "On the Colbert show they got into it a little bit. She told him she'd knock him out. I knew I could help with that."

Making the trip this time will be Crawford's longtime trainer and co-manager, Brian McIntyre, and an Omaha-based writer named Leo Biga, who has become familiar with Crawford's growing place in his city's community and his work both for Pipeline Worldwide and his B&B Boxing Academy. The latter works with at-risk youth like Crawford once was, teaching them not only how to fight but also how and when not to.

That is a lesson Crawford had to learn himself before his successful run in boxing could begin. An admitted street fighter, Crawford was discovered by a man named Carl Washington, who saw him on the streets and learned much of his time out there was spent scuffling. What Washington saw in this skinny kid was familiar to him: an angry boy with no way to channel his frustrations and disappointment.

That's a familiar story in boxing, for pain is the breeding ground of prize fighters. As Bernard Hopkins, the former middleweight and light heavyweight champion, once put it: "As long as they got ghettos, they'll have boxing." His point was the urge to fight well enough to succeed in boxing usually grows best in the most desperate circumstances.



Crawford has joined forces with Sister Rosemary Nyirumbe to help people in Africa.

"He knew I was one of the kids running around and getting into trouble," Crawford recalled. "But I didn't know who he was. When he asked me about boxing, I told him I wasn't supposed to talk to strangers and ran home.

"I told my mom about this guy and then he was standing in my door and my mom says, 'Hey, Carl.' She told me my father had boxed for him. Then she asked if I wanted to box and I said, 'Yeah.'"

Crawford had no idea what that really meant, of course. He'd simply acquiesced to a mother's question with no notion of the discipline, sacrifice and dedication required to achieve anything in boxing. Yet he took to it with the same passion Sister Rosemary Nyirumbe brings to her work with the lost children of Uganda and neighboring South Sudan. Almost immediately he fell in love with a demanding mistress.

"By the time he was 13 I knew he was different," McIntyre recalled. "He kept winning and winning and winning. He wasn't just boxing; he would walk guys down."

Despite that early success, things didn't fully change in Crawford's life until he was shot in the back of the head in 2008 leaving a dice game. He had been out earlier in the day, returned home and then was lured out by the call of the streets. He heard there was some action out there somewhere and went to find it.

The result could have killed him but it did not, in part because after he was hurt he did what fighters do. He remained calm and drove himself to a hospital.

"It scared us all pretty bad," said co-manager Cameron Dunkin. "We told him if he stayed out of those situations, boxing would give him a chance to do something big. I always thought he had a chance. That's why I signed him out of the amateurs. But I told him he couldn't be out there where the animals roam."

Crawford heeded the warning shot, which in his case was a literal one. Already a rising prospect whose handlers believed could only be stopped by himself, Crawford didn't dissent.

"Wrong place, wrong time, wrong people," he said of that night. "I wasn't doing anything bad but I was someplace I didn't need to be. I should have been home asleep. Now that's where you'd find me."

Not on the nights he's boxing,

which generally is when he puts opponents to sleep. Denied a chance to make the 2008 Olympic team by the sad realities of amateur boxing in the United States, Crawford turned pro the same year he was shot, carrying with him not the disappointment of missing the Games but a goal not yet achieved.

"Amateur boxing is very political," Crawford said. "They look for who they want to go, not who the best guys are. They said I had an attitude but I felt I was the best. A lot of times they didn't treat me fair, which is why USA Boxing is where it is today. We haven't had a great team in a decade.

"But I brushed it off. I never wanted to be a gold medalist. My dream was to be world champion."

His breakthrough moment came five years later. By then he was an undefeated prospect with 19 wins who felt as if he wasn't progressing until Arum offered him a shot against veteran Breidis Prescott, whose opponent had fallen out. For Arum, it was time to find out what he had. This was opportunity knocking and he believed Crawford, who had never gone more than eight rounds and never been in a 10-round fight, was ready to answer.

At some point, Arum knew, you take a risk, a leap of faith. Or you never leave Omaha.

"He reminded me of another fighter who had been on a path to greatness but got derailed, Donald Curry," Arum said. "Both were great boxer-punchers. I was bugging my matchmakers to give this kid a chance. When Prescott's fight fell out, I told them to put Crawford in there but Cameron was against it.

"His other manager liked it and the kid wanted it. Was I nervous? Absolutely, but I was confident he'd win. I'm not going to put him in with someone I don't believe he can beat but Prescott was a good fighter, which meant anything can happen."

What happened was Crawford appealed to Dunkin, insisting he was ready to let the world see who he knew he was. His manager hesitated.

"I did not want the fight," Dunkin admitted. "He was jumping up in class on about a week's notice. I knew he could fight but he hadn't fought anybody yet and Prescott's a dangerous guy. It wasn't that I didn't believe in him. I just didn't think it was the right time. But Terence convinced me. The kid was right, I was wrong."

Crawford pitched a near shutout and three fights later found himself in the Scottish Exhibition Center in Glasgow, facing then-WBO lightweight champion Ricky Burns in front of a hostile crowd. In short order he tamed Burns and those fans, returning to Omaha as its first homegrown world champion and an athlete who would gain the support of its leading citizen, billionaire investor Warren Buffett, who is now a ringside regular when Crawford works.

What Buffett has seen would have been a great investment because in his next outing three months later, Crawford stopped previously undefeated Yuriorkis Gamboa in the ninth round, dropping him four times and surviving being rocked himself. Suddenly, he was a star streaking across the sky.

"I can adjust to anything," Crawford (26-0, 18 KOs) said. "Gamboa won the first few rounds while I was getting my distance and timing down. I tried to time his jumping in and out. It took a couple rounds but I got it. Then I got a little overconfident and paid the price for it.

"I got to the point I felt he couldn't hurt me, which is always a mistake. I came in careless and got tagged but I adjusted. That's the fight everyone remembers because of the type of fight it was but I still think my biggest fight was becoming lightweight champion in Scotland because I did it in hostile territory.

"Ray Beltran had just got robbed there but I took it anyway. I put it in God's hands. I went there with the mindset of winning every round. If I did, there's no way they could take it

MAKING OF A STAR

Terence Crawford was a contender with immense potential only a year and half ago. Since then, in only four fights, he has established himself as one of the best fighters in the world. Here's how it happened:

March 1, 2014: Traveled to unfriendly confines to face WBO lightweight champ and hometown favorite Ricky Burns in Glasgow, Scotland, but emerged with a one-sided victory – 116-112, 117-111 and 116-112 – and his first world title.

June 28, 2014: Made his first defense against Cuban Yuriorkis Gamboa at home in Omaha, Nebraska, on a big stage: HBO. And Crawford made the most of the opportunity, stopping Gamboa in the ninth round of a thrilling breakthrough performance.

Nov. 29, 2014: Ray Beltran was as gritty as ever but he was outclassed by Crawford, who pitched a near shutout in Omaha to win the vacant RING 135-pound title. Crawford was named the Boxing Writers Association of America Fighter of the Year.

April 18, 2015: Moved up to 140 pounds, which clearly had no adverse effects on him. Crawford stopped an overwhelmed Thomas Dulorme in the sixth round to win the vacant WBO junior welterweight title in Arlington, Texas.

Crawford took a moment to absorb his title-winning victory over Ricky Burns in Scotland.

from me."

Those two victories brought Crawford the dream he'd held close since Carl Washington knocked on his mother's door. But fulfilling a dream can sometimes be a problem because what else is there? Can you create a new dream? Or do you become stultified by self-satisfaction?

"When you conquer one dream, you do have to find another," Crawford said. "All I wanted to do was be world champion. Then it was to become a multi-division champion. Now it's to become the top pound-for-pound. That's Floyd (Mayweather) now, without a doubt. But that's what I want."

After outpointing Beltran by a wide margin in his third lightweight title fight, last November, Crawford found himself in an unexpected place. He'd won three title fights in a year but soon would learn he'd won something more. The little kid from north Omaha was the Boxing Writers Association of America Fighter of the Year.

Beating Prescott and Burns or turning Gamboa into a yo-yo didn't shock him. In the ring he has grown to expect success. But a BWAA honor first awarded to Jack Dempsey in 1938 and shared by nearly every great boxer since is not something you dream of.

It's something that just happens, but only if you have the grit and skills to make it happen.

"It came as a big surprise," Crawford said. "It was never something I planned. A guy from Omaha doesn't dream about that. I think the writers saw the talent and the potential I have."

Crawford showcased them further on April 18 when he stepped up to 140 pounds and destroyed Thomas Dulorme in a one-sided battle for the vacant WBO junior welterweight title. It was another opportunity to impress a wide audience and make a statement. When he dropped Dulorme three times in the sixth round before the fight was stopped, he'd made a loud one that rang true to him in unusual fashion.

"It's great to have a type of person like Warren Buffett as a fan of mine," Crawford said. "I'm little compared to him. To have a billionaire a fan of Terence Crawford shows me I'm doing something right.

"I'm not gunning for anybody. Whoever they put in front of me, I'm willing to fight. There's talk about Pacquiao at some point. If it ever happens, it'll be an evenly matched fight. I want to fight the biggest and the best fighters. That's what will solidify my career. I'm a risk taker. Big risks, big rewards.

"I want people to say, 'Terence Crawford fought the best out there. He fought everyone who wanted to fight him.' You never heard of Manny Pacquiao turning down an opponent. Big, small, long or tall. I want people to think the same of me."

McIntyre and Dunkin agree, knowing that to defeat Pacquiao would not only likely fill suitcases full of clothes for struggling kids in Uganda. It would lift Terence Crawford onto the world's stage.

"That could really open the door for him," Dunkin said. "He could go up to 147 and fight a Pacquiao, then come back to 140 if there are better fights there. He wants to be a great fighter and unlike Mayweather, who thinks building a record makes you great, he wants to prove he's great.

"We're talking about (Lucas) Matthysse or (Ruslan) Provodnikov in October, then we'll see. He keeps fighting tough guys because those are the ones he wants to beat. The kid's a star."

"I don't care who he fights or where he fights," McIntyre added. "He can fight in a phone booth in Des Moines or Madison Square Garden. Nobody is going to beat Terence Crawford."

McIntyre may be right because while Crawford is a prize fighter interested in a world larger than the one boxing encompasses, he remains well aware of the world he once knew. North Omaha remains a hardscrabble place but it is his place, the one that will always be home no matter how far away he roams.

"One day I'd love to fight at Madison Square Garden," Crawford said. "All the great fighters fought there. I want to be able to say I fought there. But I'll never forget who I was when I was little. That's why I had 'OMAHA' on my trunks in Scotland. I'm proud of where I come from. All the pain, all the suffering, all the damage I saw there is how I got here."

It's also how he got to Uganda ... and why he left with an empty suitcase and a full heart. RING

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT

CANELO ALVAREZ'S KO OF **JAMES KIRKLAND** WAS EVERYTHING MAYWEATHER-PACQUIAO WASN'T AND BOOSTED THE MEXICAN'S MOMENTUM

By **Norm Frauenheim**

The fight between Canelo Alvarez and James Kirkland was riveting even if it wasn't competitive.

Charisma has been attached to Canelo Alvarez ever since red appeared at the top of his head. It's almost like a force of nature, rooted in stubborn genes and re-appearing with maturing power at exactly the right moment.

That moment: May 9.

Against James Kirkland in a major-league baseball park in Houston, Alvarez scored a knockout that in history's rearview mirror looks like a game-saving home run. The week before, Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Manny Pacquiao

engaged in a bout that generated unprecedented revenue for a few and ill will for everybody else.

Mayweather's decision over Pacquiao was a cynical exercise, said HBO's Jim Lampley, who worked the pay-per-view record-setter. "Greed is good," actor Michael Douglas' character Gordon Gekko said in a line that defines the 1987 film "Wall Street." But it's lousy if you paid $100 for the high-def version of Mayweather-Pacquiao, which faced impossible expectations and failed to fulfill all of them but the profit margin. It was a fight without a soul. Not much of a conscience, either.

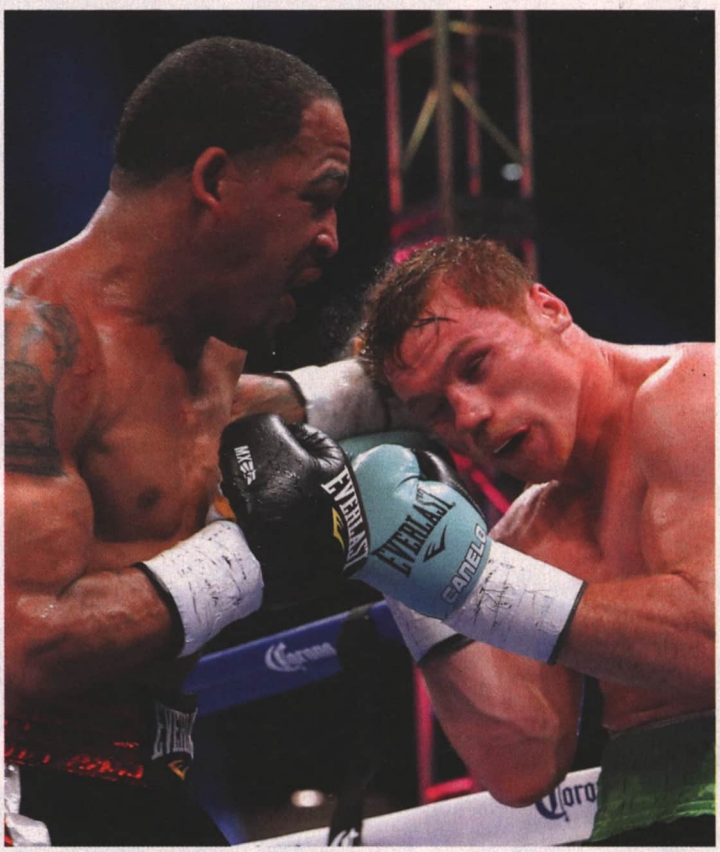
Then there was Canelo, who arrived seven days later with a third-round knockout that reminds us that it doesn't have to be that way.

Kirkland is as likable as he is star-crossed. Fans can hope he overcomes a troubled past that includes jail. But it's hope undercut by a vulnerable chin and instability in a corner without his longtime trainer, Ann Wolfe.

That Kirkland chin played a leading role on the infield at Minute Maid Park, the Astros' home field, when it got in the way of an Alvarez right as powerful as it was precise. Kirkland spun to his left, spun out of consciousness and onto the canvas at 2:19 of the round.

It was scary. It was dramatic. It was definitive, which means it was everything that Mayweather-Pacquiao was not. It provided long-term possibilities and an immediate refuge for many who had looked at the business in the post-week wake of Mayweather-Pacquiao and saw only a dead end.

Serious questions linger as to how many pay-per-view customers will be back for Mayweather's attempt to equal Rocky Marciano's 49-0 mark in a bout planned for September. Then there's Pacquiao. Will the Filipino congressman be back at all from surgery to repair a torn ligament in his right shoulder? There are answers but none look promising.



Kirkland (left) gave everything he had but it wasn't enough.

There was only one question about Canelo after HBO's biggest audience since Antonio Tarver-Bernard Hopkins in 2006 – 2.146 million, according to Nielsen – watched him put the finishing touch on a fight that stood in dramatic contrast to the Mayweather-Pacquiao replay included in the telecast. To wit: When can we see him again?

"We witnessed the future," said Canelo promoter Oscar De La Hoya, whose Golden Boy fortunes are tied to the Mexican's surging stardom. "This is exactly what needed to happen. Mayweather-Pacquiao? People will forget."

There's some doubt about how much they'll be willing to forgive. Without Canelo's timing, however, there wouldn't be an immediate opportunity to move on from and perhaps beyond an immediate public backlash.

Mayweather likes to say he's the face of boxing. If there's a lesson to be taken from a symbolic changing of the guard within eight crazy days in early May, however, it's that there's no single face. Yet there is a defining characteristic. It's resilience, and these days it looks a lot like Canelo.

His first and former manager, Rafael Mendoza of Guadalajara, saw it in the victory over Kirkland. Mendoza, also a longtime Mexican journalist, says the Canelo he saw against Kirkland resembled the more complete fighter who learned the craft by studying the legends.

"Yes, I liked what I saw because there was more movement and he was in good condition after having no fight in almost a year," Mendoza said of the former junior middleweight champion whose flagging endurance in earlier fights had begun to raise doubts about his diligence in training.

Canelo also had begun to get sloppy, especially about the fundamentals, says Mendoza, who first worked with him as a 15-year-old and left him just before he turned 20.

"They made him think he was a knockout artist," Mendoza said.

Throughout 12 one-sided rounds

Alvarez enhanced his image by destroying Kirkland in a spectacular fight.

in September 2013, Mayweather reminded him he was not. The lopsided decision enriched Canelo but also humiliated him.

"Mayweather does not hit you; he embarrasses you," Mendoza said. "That's what he does. That is his style."

At that point, it might have been easy for Canelo to recede into a comfortable life, which can end a career as fast as a knockout punch. Marvin Hagler once said it's hard to get up to do roadwork at 5 a.m. after you've been sleeping in silk sheets. At 22, Canelo, a kid who grew up on a horse farm in the state of Jalisco, suddenly had all the money he'd ever need.

His piece of the fight's revenue, the record before Mayweather-Pacquiao, put his 2013 income at $21 million, good enough for No. 66 on the Forbes list of the world's top-earning athletes, alongside NFL quarterbacks Drew Brees of the New Orleans Saints and Eli Manning of the New York Giants.

But he did not retreat into those silk sheets. There was no comfort in the embarrassment from a loss in which he never seemed to have a clue, much less a chance, despite a judge who turned in a curious 114-114 scorecard. He and his Mexican fans knew better.

"Never again," Canelo said in a conference call before the Kirkland fight. "That was a hard lesson I had to learn."

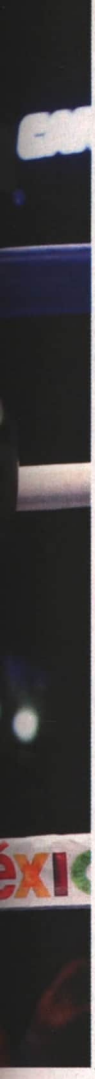
And correct.

An initial part of the correction came against Kirkland, who was down in the opening round. But it's an ongoing process, says Mendoza, a quiet and objective force behind Humberto Gonzalez and other great Mexican careers.

"Against Kirkland, he was not the technician that he was when he was younger," Mendoza said. "But he showed more movement and has done a lot of work on his legs. He's a very good combination puncher. He always has been. He's a very good counterpuncher. He got away from all of that. But the loss to Mayweather woke him up to what he knew he had to do. I think it was something that came from within him. He did it himself."

There's evident pride in Canelo, who has insisted that he stand alone as a main-event attraction and has argued that he wants to reclaim the traditional May and September dates for Mexican fans. For the last several years, Mayweather has marked the Cinco de Mayo and the Sept. 16 celebration of Mexican independence as his own. In addition to the pride, there has always been a curiosity about Canelo, even before he ever answered an opening bell.

Canelo's mom used to run a small Mexican eatery in his hometown, tiny Tlajomulco de Zuniga. Mom



Did Alvarez's exciting victory set up a showdown with Miguel Cotto?

would bring her son to the restaurant so she could keep an eye on him. The place would get crowded but not with people who were there to dine. They wanted to see the kid with the red hair. The old story is about a child who grew up with a crowd around him. Today, it's a story about a young man who has an innate understanding of what is to be a public personality. That might explain his charisma.

The "it factor," says Hall of Fame promoter Don Chargin, who works for Golden Boy as an adviser on how to market Canelo and move him through the 154-pound ranks. That "it" is up to the beholder. Canelo, however, possesses an almost instinctive ability in knowing how and when to put it on display, put it to work.

He had to do exactly that after an early fascination with his background, looks and ability reached a plateau. There was ambivalence about whom he was fighting. There was a collection of unknowns, one Howdy-Doody after another. It was then that Canelo began to lose track of the fighter he had trained to be. Mendoza says he provided him with film of the legends, everybody from Jose Napoles to Sugar Ray Robinson. But those video lessons were forgotten or at least obscured by a young fighter who was deluded by the quality of is opposition.

He had quit learning, says Mendoza, who blames the inexperience of Canelo's corner, the father-and-son team Chepo and Eddy Reynoso. Canelo has been with both since he was an amateur.

"He needed a disciplinarian, a good boxing teacher," Mendoza said. "That is the main reason I split with them. They are nice people. Very, very nice people. But being nice doesn't mean you are the right people for a fighter. But Canelo is loyal. He's a loyal person."

Doubts about Canelo's corner were first heard in the wake of his loss to Mayweather. The whispers got a little louder after a dull effort in a decision over against Erislandy Lara in July 2014. Lara, who uses his speed to circle yet rarely engage, makes anybody look bad, especially himself. Nonetheless, it was beginning to look as if Canelo's career was at a standstill. That's when he took initiative, assumed accountability for himself and his stalled momentum.

"That's when he knew: 'I have to correct things myself because they can't help me,'" Mendoza said. "Against Mayweather, he realized that they didn't know what to do."

For Mendoza, doubts about Canelo's corner persist. Nevertheless, he is confident that Canelo would prevail against Miguel Cotto during another chapter in the rich tradition of the Mexican-Puerto Rican rivalry. A Canelo-Cotto bout was projected throughout May and early June before Cotto's bout with Australian middleweight Daniel Geale on June 6 at Barclays Center in Brooklyn. Canelo's youth and power would be too much for Cotto, says Mendoza, who believes the Puerto Rican beat a damaged Sergio Martinez last year.

"Martinez almost came to the ring on a cane," he said of the Argentine, who fought on a surgically-repaired knee.

If Canelo fights and beats Cotto, Canelo-Gennady Golovkin looms. It's the biggie, although certainly not as big in the public imagination as Mayweather-Pacquiao had been for about six years. But big enough and a lot more doable. Canelo turns 25 on July 18; Golovkin turned 33 on April 8.

The younger Canelo, who sparred with Golovkin a few years ago in Big Bear, California, would just be entering his prime. But Mendoza gives him no chance against the feared GGG, a natural middleweight.

"In my opinion, Golovkin is the best fighter in the world right now," Mendoza said. "You pick the weight: 154, 155, 156, whatever. Golovkin beats Canelo at any of them."

Still, there is an irresistible element to Canelo versus Golovkin. Mexico is still searching for a successor to Julio Cesar Chavez. His son, Julio Cesar Chavez Jr., continues to prove he only has the name. The son's bid to be like the father probably came to a definitive end when he quit on the stool against Andrzej Fonfara on April 18 at the StubHub Center in Carson, California. The crowd booed and threw debris, ugly gestures that said Mexican fans have lost faith and patience in Chavez Jr.

That trims the list of potential successors to one and perhaps only one, although Mendoza says Canelo will never be ranked alongside Chavez or ahead of Ruben Olivares and Pipino Cuevas.

"I think Canelo makes Mexicans in the United States nostalgic for Chavez," said Mendoza, who believes Canelo's optimum weight is 154, 155 pounds. "But fans in Mexico will remember Canelo for Mayweather, for losing a stupid fight in a stupid way. He didn't apply pressure in the Mexican style."

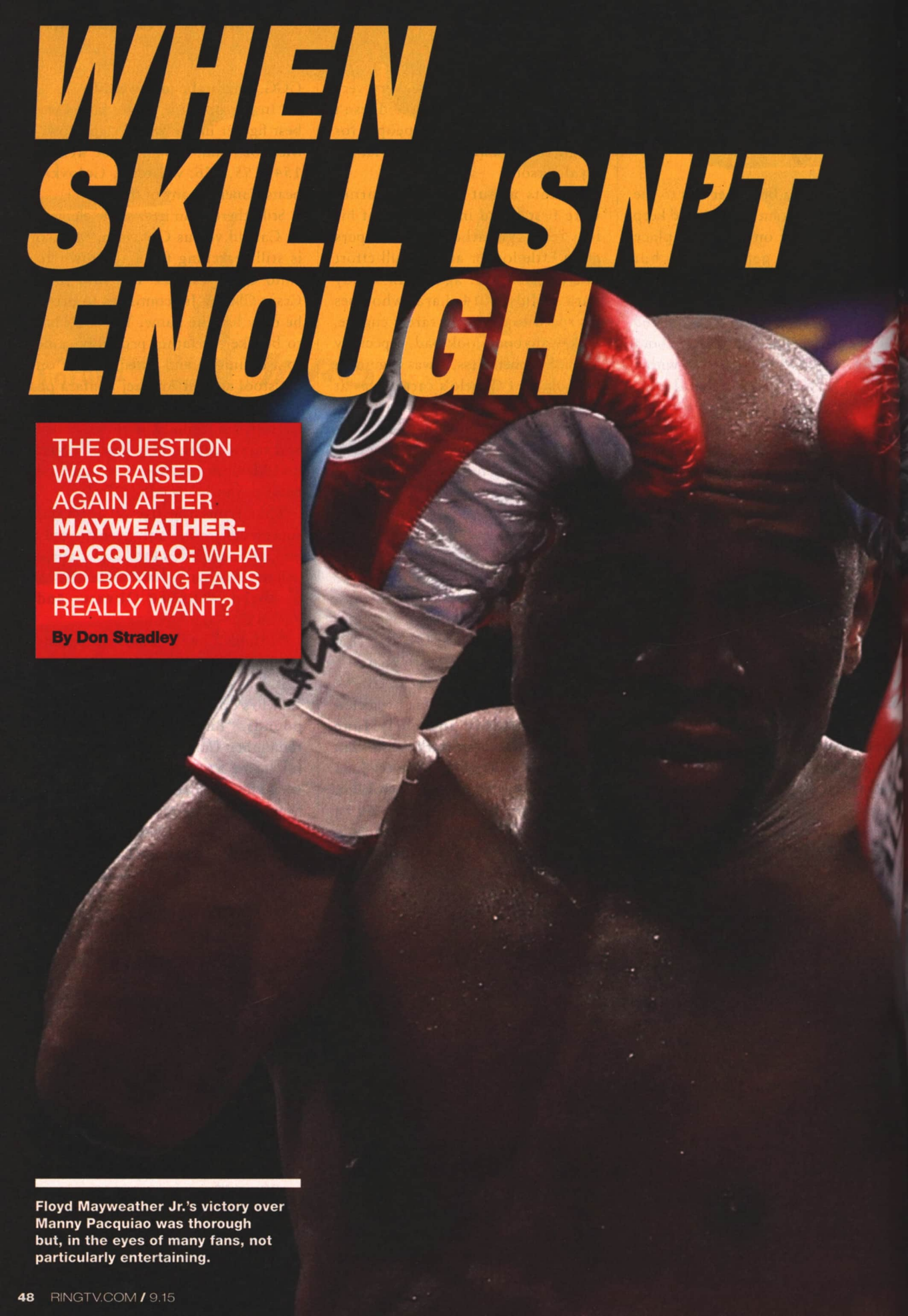
But Golovkin does. Increasingly, Mexican fans see the Chavez style in the Kazakhstani middleweight. He is heavy-handed and moves forward, applying pressure relentlessly, with an array of punishing body blows. Before his last two fights in Los Angeles, there were T-shirts and political campaign-like buttons that said "Mexicans for GGG."

The T-shirts and buttons might stay in the closet for a Canelo-GGG fight. Like his vow to re-take the Mexican holidays from Mayweather, Canelo would be in battle to restore the allegiance of fellow Mexicans. It'll take more than just charisma to pull that off. But it's beginning to look as if he'll get that opportunity. Call it another chance. Another time. Another moment.

WHEN SKILL ISN'T ENOUGH

THE QUESTION WAS RAISED AGAIN AFTER **MAYWEATHER-PACQUIAO:** WHAT DO BOXING FANS REALLY WANT?

By Don Stradley



Floyd Mayweather Jr.'s victory over Manny Pacquiao was thorough but, in the eyes of many fans, not particularly entertaining.

A week after Mayweather-Pacquiao, Canelo Alvarez knocked out James Kirkland in the kind of war fans crave.

Case No. 1: Floyd Mayweather Jr. conducts a veritable master class in boxing to outpoint Manny Pacquiao over 12 rounds in Las Vegas. The customers boo, and a USA Today headline roars, "A Complete Waste of Time and Money."

Case No. 2: Canelo Alvarez scores a third-round KO of James Kirkland in Houston. Customers cheer wildly. An ESPN.com headline screams, "Just What Boxing Needs."

Of course, you could substitute just about any of Mayweather's fights in the first case or those featuring any other smart boxer who prefers to hit and not be hit. Defensive masters, no matter how adroit, rarely win the hearts of the ticket buyers or the media. Even the great Willie Pep, who won 229 bouts and boasted that opponents "couldn't hit me with a handful of rocks," was not unanimously appreciated during his heyday. A 1950 New York bout with Ray Famechon saw Pep sweep nearly all 15 rounds but the AP reported that Willie's effort was met "with a torrent of boos at the final bell."

Skill, it seems, has never been quite enough. »

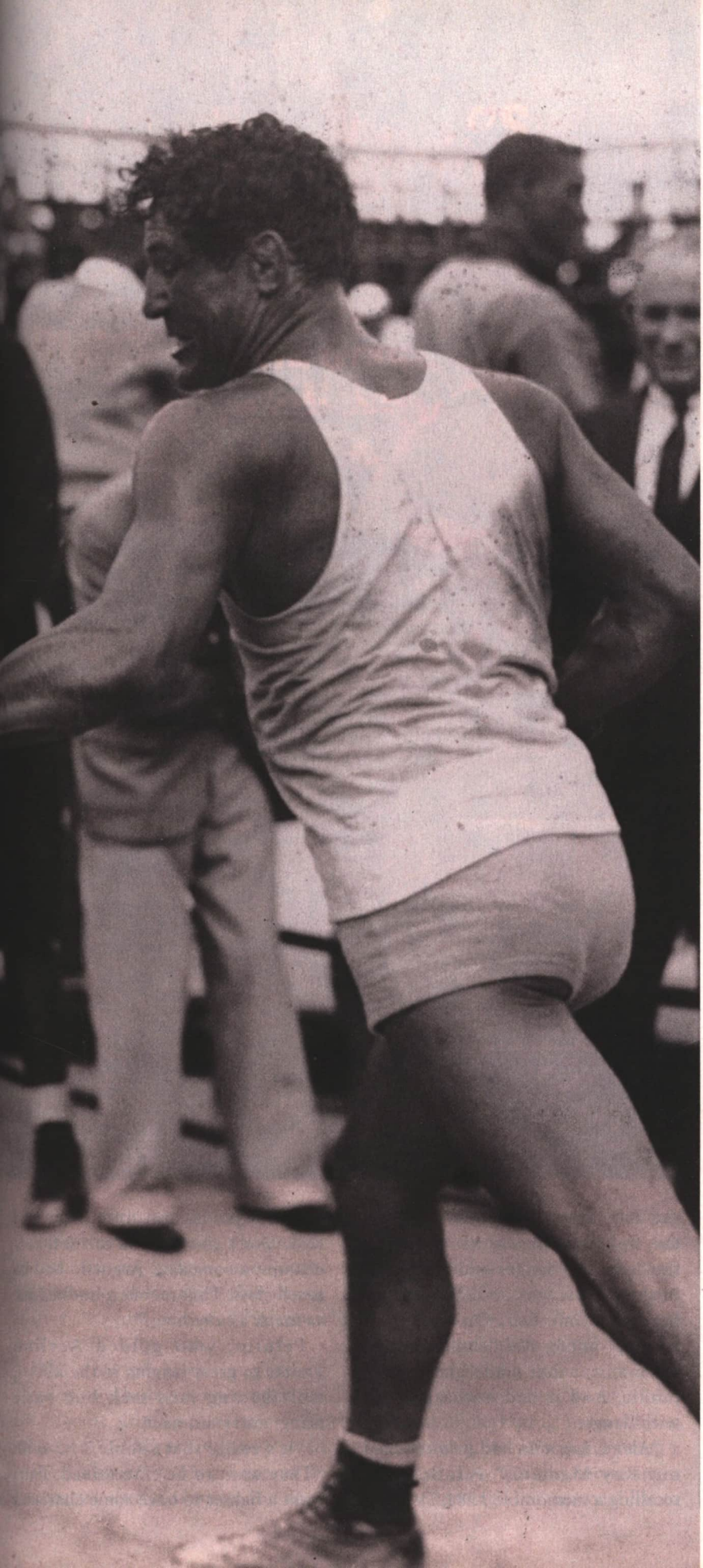
Pep's reputation has grown over the years, to the point where he's generally regarded as one of the top fighters of all time. One imagines that Mayweather will also benefit from the glowing effects of time and mythmaking. But when people are asked to spend $99.99 on a pay-per-view event, as was the case with Mayweather-Pacquiao, watching a fighter duck, dodge and twist out of his opponent's reach becomes less exciting. We'll bet that even those who praise Mayweather for his defensive tactics were disappointed. Wake one of them up at 3 a.m. and we guarantee he'll say something like, "I can't believe I shelled out a hundred bucks for that crap."

So what exactly are fight fans and the media looking for? Is it just violence?

"Fans of any sport want action," said Main Events promoter Kathy Duva. "They don't want to see a football team grind it out one yard at a time. They want to see something spectacular. A subset of boxing fans can watch Floyd or Guillermo Rigondeaux but those fighters never really earn a fan's loyalty."

"Thank God there are all kinds of fighters," said Showtime analyst Steve Farhood, a former editor of THE RING. "I'd get tired of brawls if that was all we saw. I'm also glad that not every fighter is like Mayweather because I wouldn't want to see that style all the time. I like chicken, but I wouldn't want to eat it 365 days a year."

We have to wonder, too, if Alvarez's stoppage of Kirkland a week later would've been so widely praised if Mayweather-Pacquiao hadn't been such a big yawn. It's not going out on a limb to say that a lot of good 154-pounders would knock Kirkland out. Yet fans treated Alvarez's victory as if it were the second coming of Mike Tyson, conveniently forgetting that Alvarez has already lost to Mayweather and didn't look too good in the process. No one doubts that the red-headed Alvarez is a Mexican



Legendary fighters like Jack Dempsey (left) and Max Baer had the looks and charisma that attracted fans.

cash cow but was the reaction to his recent win a bit overdone?

"Fans like power punchers," said boxing manager Frank Espinoza, who has handled the likes of Israel Vazquez and Abner Mares. "And knockouts always look good on television. If people seemed to be in awe of Canelo, it's because they didn't have to pay a hundred dollars to see him. But mostly, they were happy because Kirkland and Canelo came to fight. Sure, you can say Kirkland isn't great, but he had heart. The defensive fighters who dance around don't look like they came to fight. More than anything else, fans want to see the warrior spirit."

According to Espinoza, all sorts of factors are involved in attracting fans.

"It helps if a fighter is good-looking. He'll have more followers that way and maybe gain some female interest," he said. "At the end of the day he has to know how to fight but there should be a total package of looks, personality, and ability. I've always looked for fighters who are presentable on television. We want those Coca-Cola endorsements."

This idea of the handsome warrior isn't so farfetched. Look at old pics of Jack Dempsey or Max Baer or Sugar Ray Robinson. Compared to baseball or football stars of yesteryear, many of the top boxing champions were surprisingly photogenic and glamorous.

"The key point is that boxing is a star-driven sport," said Farhood, who feels a fighter can become an attraction whether he's a slugger or a fancy boxer. "A fighter's star-appeal is not always tied to his style. Popularity is usually based on personality. Remember, not all of Muhammad Ali's fights were exciting. It was his personality that made him a big star." Added Duva,

"There will always be people who care nothing about boxing and just chase the stars."

OK. We get it. Charisma counts. But is that just a polite cover-up for the sport's real appeal, sort of like the old joke about men buying Playboy for the great articles?

There was a telling moment in the recent flyweight bout featuring Roman "Chocolatito" Gonzalez against veteran Edgar Sosa. It happened when Gonzalez had Sosa stunned and on the verge of going down. Suddenly, the crowd at the Forum in Inglewood, California, unleashed a sound unlike any we've heard in a while: screaming in anticipation of Sosa's destruction. Those fans didn't want skill. They didn't even want a competitive bout. It was bullring time and the horde wanted to see the animal slain. If Gonzalez had sliced off the fallen Sosa's ear and tossed it to his admirers, there would've been a mad scramble to bring the gory relic home. Fight fans, on this night at least, were bloodthirsty and not ashamed.

"I don't know if it's bloodlust," Duva said, "but the excitement level always goes up when someone is closing the show. If you have an opponent hurt and you don't put him out, the fans perceive it as if you're denying them something."

Duva feels the average fan wants a fighter to be special in some way.

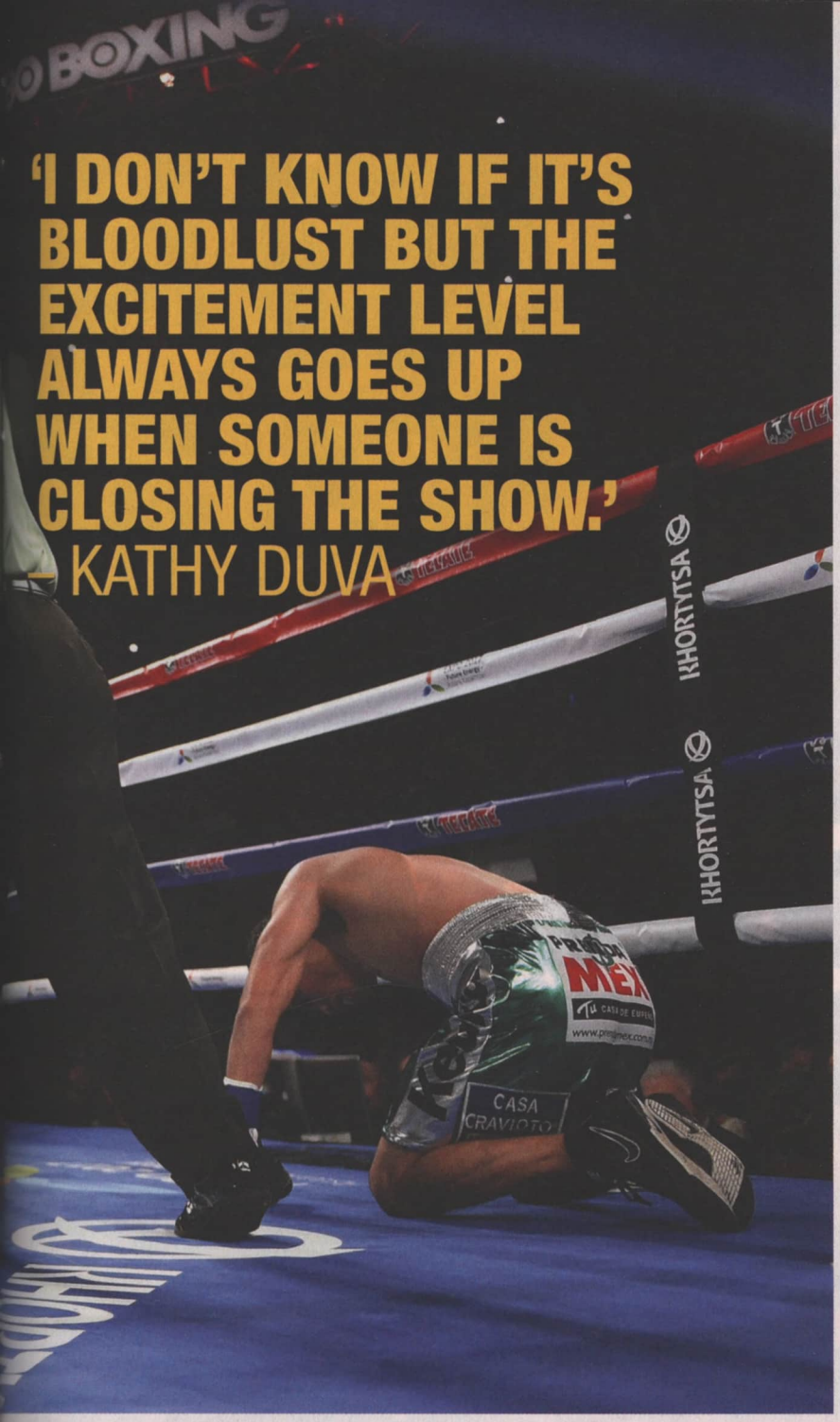
"A fighter has to be awesome at some level," Duva said. "And I use the word 'awesome' in its biggest sense. He can do it by engaging the fans. Ray Leonard and Oscar De La Hoya come to mind. If a fighter isn't great at interviews, he has to have a commanding presence in the ring, like a Tommy Hearns. People respond to a guy who intimidates. Of course, Floyd is the exception. He's not commanding, he's not good with fans, and he doesn't intimidate anybody. He's not awesome, unless it's at spending money."

When asked to name the first bout she attended, Duva couldn't recall the fighters but she never forgot the "sense of danger and electricity in the air." It was enough to make her a lifetime fan. On the other hand, promoter Art Pelullo recalled the moment that made him boxing junkie. And it had nothing to do with danger.

"Alexis Arguello had just knocked out Ray Mancini," Pelullo said, recalling a memorable 1981 TV bout. "Then he put his arm around him and said, 'Don't give up. You can still be a champion someday.' Arguello had so much class. That moment hooked me as much as anything."

Pelullo, who guided Acelino Freitas to great heights in the 2000s, feels boxing fans seek one basic thing: entertainment.

"It's really that simple," he said. "They want to be entertained. Fans want a fighter to have some charisma



'I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S BLOODLUST BUT THE EXCITEMENT LEVEL ALWAYS GOES UP WHEN SOMEONE IS CLOSING THE SHOW.'
– KATHY DUVA

The fans at the Roman Gonzalez-Edgar Sosa fight might've appreciated Gonzalez's skill but they loved his power.

too. The fighting is only part of it. A fighter has to have personality because fans are going to listen to this guy talk and that's when they decide if they like him or not. Remember, we're in show business."

OK, the picture is getting clearer. Fighters aren't battling on Mount Olympus. They're on television. Therefore, they need to be TV-worthy. They have to be handsome and charming, and they have to fight like berserkers. They have to be dangerous, but classy. And as Larry Merchant once said during a long ago HBO broadcast, they have to convince the fans "that they are willing to walk through fire."

It seems like that is an awful lot to ask of a pugilist but the sweet science isn't just about hitting and not being hit anymore. It's also about being a TV personality. It's also, increasingly, about exposing your personal life to public scrutiny.

"Shows like HBO's '24/7' are a big influence now," Duva said. "Fans watch that show and they'll like a fighter based on how he lives his life. If it's a trainwreck, all the better."

Sheesh. It used to be that all a fighter needed was a good left jab and some footwork. Now he has to be a Kardashian. Of course, there will always be fighters who appear to have the goods but for some reason they never quite connect with the customers.

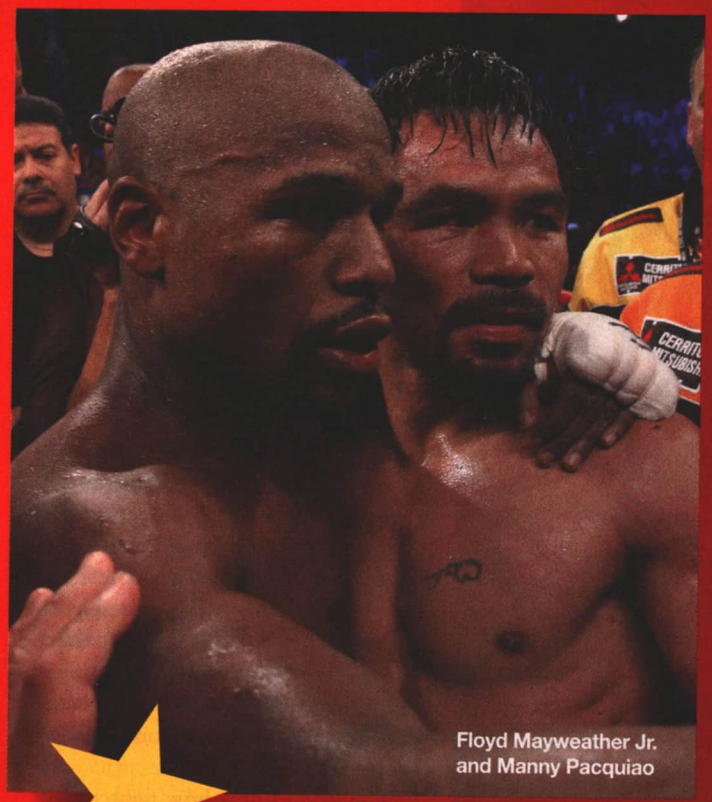
"You never know how fighters will develop," Pelullo said. "You don't know how they'll handle adversity." A prospect's failure to create interest can be heartbreaking, admits Pelullo, "especially if you put a lot of money into the guy."

"All managers have had a fighter who seemed perfect but for some reason they just didn't impress anyone," Espinoza said. "I've managed a lot of fighters but all managers know that only a chosen few will click."

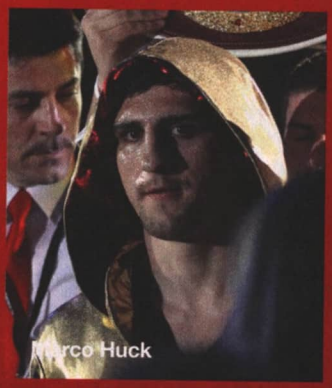
Duva hit some fresh pay-dirt with current light heavyweight titlist Sergey Kovalev. He's a knockout puncher with the sort of happy-go-lucky personality that has already endeared him to fans. After he was mobbed at a recent event, Duva proudly told him that he'd become a star at last.

Kovalev's reaction surprised her. "He thought about it and said, 'I don't know if I like being a star.' He thinks it's too much attention. But I told him, 'That's how it's going to be for a while.'"

The crucial words here are "for a while." For the one thing we do know about boxing fans is that they'll forget you just as quickly as they embraced you, regardless of how many soft drinks you sell.



Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Manny Pacquiao



Marco Huck

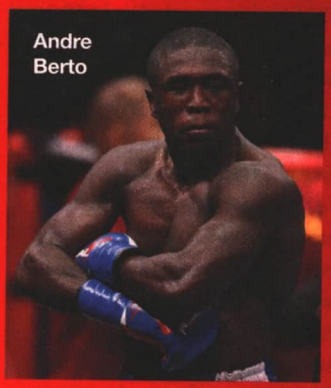
Adonis Stevenson

Carl Froch

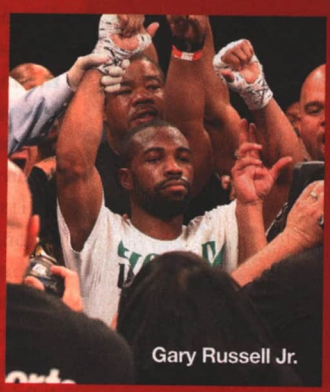
Jorge Linares

The RING STATE OF

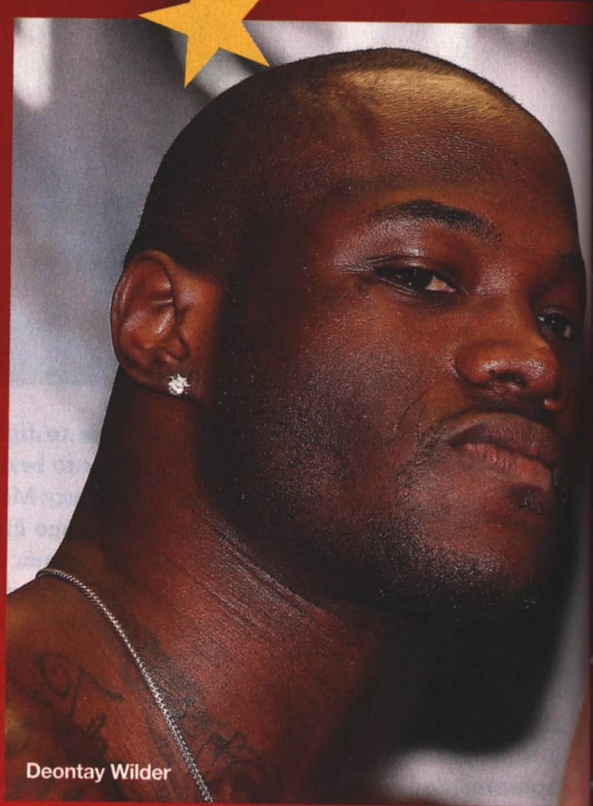
By **David Greisman**



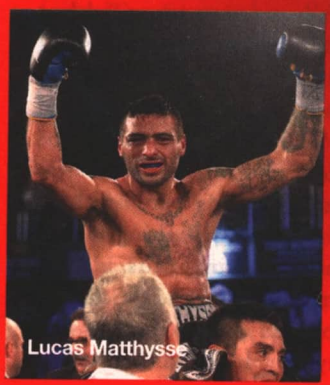
Andre Berto



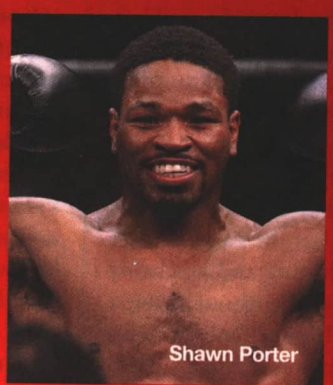
Gary Russell Jr.



Deontay Wilder

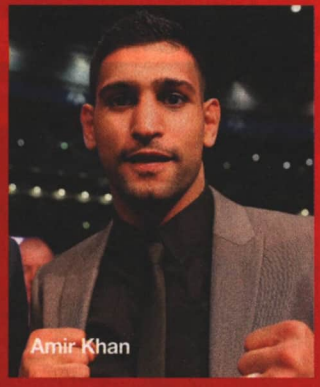


Lucas Matthysse

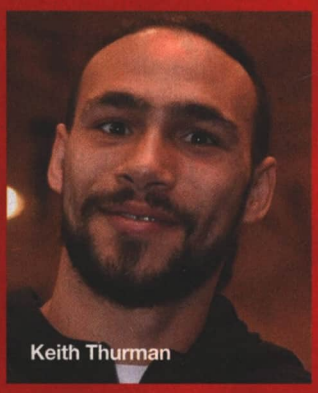


Shawn Porter

Miguel Cotto


Amir Khan

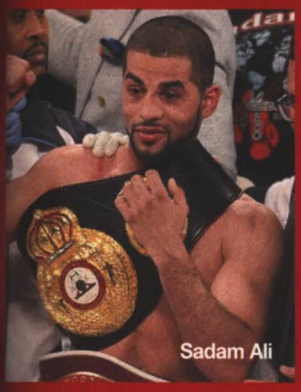
Abner Mares


Keith Thurman

Anthony Joshua

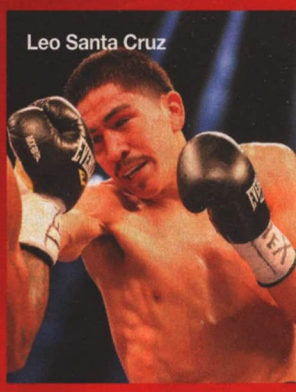
THE GAME

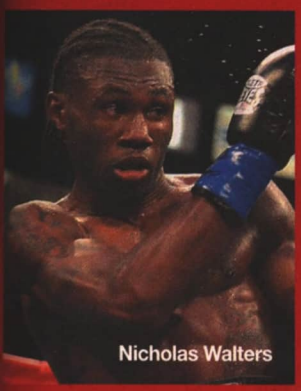
Compiled by **David Greisman, Martin Mulcahey and Anson Wainwright**

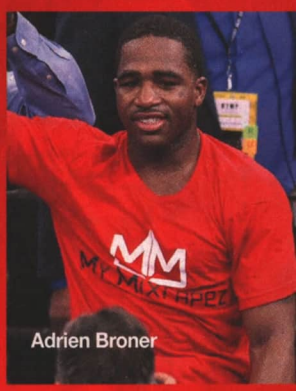

Sadam Ali

If you want one sign of how quickly and how much things can change in this sport, then just think back to a year ago and whether you ever envisioned Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Manny Pacquiao finally sharing a ring in the most lucrative boxing match ever. That's just one of the many, many developments we've seen since around this time in 2014 — and so much more will occur over the next 12 months.

Our annual State of the Game looks at the past and the present for their implications on the future. There are boxers who are ascending and those who are declining. There are weight classes dominated by a few fighters and deep divisions where seemingly any pairing would be entertaining. And through it all, there is our team of boxing experts – David Greisman, Martin Mulcahey and Anson Wainwright – who examine and explain what's going on and what's to come in boxing's 17 divisions. »


Leo Santa Cruz


Nicholas Walters


Adrien Broner

Wladimir Klitschko is expected to rule the heavyweight division for the foreseeable future.

Fighters and fans alike have waited nearly a decade for the Wladimir Klitschko era to end but the king shows no signs of slowing down at 39, having beaten nearly every worthy challenger to his throne and several very unworthy ones. His older brother, Vitali, took care of many of the rest. Yet Vitali's retirement opened the door for others to get a foothold in the division. Bermane Stiverne was the first to pick up Vitali's vacated title only to lose it to Deontay Wilder one fight later. Wladimir and Wilder hope they can meet in 2016. Meanwhile, as always, contenders and pretenders are positioning themselves for title shots while a slew of prospects are on their way up, hoping to be the next Mike Tyson instead of yet another Michael Grant. Much of the talent continues to come from Europe, though that isn't exclusively the case.

THE STARS

Klitschko holds three world titles and has now successfully defended one of his belts 18 times and the RING championship 11 times. He's coming off a big knockout of contender Kubrat Pulev last November and outpointed a game, defensively capable Bryant Jennings in April. Up next will be his third straight undefeated opponent, British big man Tyson Fury, a mandatory challenger who at 6-foot-9 is taller than Klitschko. Wilder suffered a hand injury in his win over Stiverne, the first time a Wilder bout has ever gone to the scorecards, and then stopped Eric Molina in June.

THE DEPTH

Here is a mix of men who've either already lost a title bout or are close to challenging for a title without having done much to earn the opportunity. Fury's biggest wins are over Dereck Chisora (twice), Steve Cunningham and Kevin Johnson. He'll face Klitschko next. Vyacheslav Glazkov is also unbeaten but has had multiple bouts end controversially, including decision victories over Cunningham and Derric Rossy, plus a draw with Malik Scott. Alexander Povetkin blew out Mike Perez in May and has won three in a row since losing to Klitschko in 2013. Ruslan Chagaev has six straight wins since losing to Povetkin in 2011. Jennings lost to Klitschko but won't necessarily be disappearing just yet. Plenty of others are on the fringe and seeking to return to contention.

BEST PUNCHER
WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO

BEST BOXER
WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO

MOST PROTECTED
LUCAS BROWNE

IS HE STILL AROUND?
SHANNON BRIGGS

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO VS. DEONTAY WILDER

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
ALEXANDER POVETKIN

MOST FUN TO WATCH
CHRIS ARREOLA

ON THE WAY UP
ANTHONY JOSHUA

ON THE WAY DOWN
MIKE PEREZ

BEST FIGHT OF 2014
STEVE CUNNINGHAM UD 10 AMIR MANSOUR

THE FUTURE

A pair of young heavyweights — Anthony Joshua and Joseph Parker — are more enticing than many of the old names somehow still clinging on. Joshua won gold for the United Kingdom in 2012, is 6-foot-6 and is aiming to have a far better pro career than did another British gold medalist, Audley Harrison. Parker is a little smaller and fights out of New Zealand. Each is at least a couple years away from challenging for a title, if not more. Less heralded is Dominic Breazeale, who represented the United States in 2012. ★

TITLEHOLDERS BY COUNTRY

Fifty-two fighters from 22 countries hold world titles.

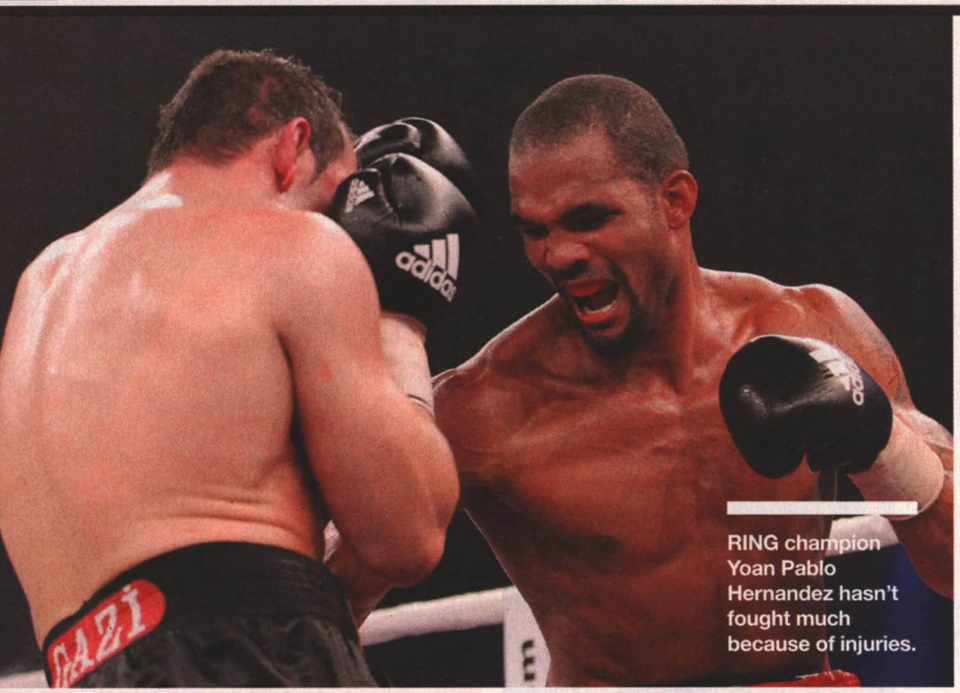
For the third straight year, the top two countries are the United States and Japan. The United Kingdom has added more titleholders and moved into a tie for third place with Mexico while Russia has fallen into fifth, where it is tied with Puerto Rico.

Six new countries are on the list this year: Colombia (lightweight Darleys Perez); Ireland (middleweight Andy Lee); Nicaragua (flyweight Roman Gonzalez); Puerto Rico (middleweight Miguel Cotto and junior lightweights Roman Martinez and Jose Pedraza); Sweden (super middleweight Badou Jack); and Venezuela (lightweight Jorge Linares).

Four countries from last year's list, meanwhile, are now off as their fighters lost belts: Cameroon (super middleweight Sakio Bika); Panama (bantamweight Anselmo Moreno); Poland (cruiserweight Krzysztof Wlodarczyk); and Spain (junior featherweight Kiko Martinez).

Note: This list is as of June 14 and includes RING champions and WBA, WBC, IBF and WBO titleholders. It doesn't include "interim" titleholders or "regular" WBA titleholders in divisions where there is also a "super" titleholder.

UNITED STATES	11
JAPAN	8
MEXICO	4
UNITED KINGDOM	4
PUERTO RICO	3
RUSSIA	3
CUBA	2
THAILAND	2
UKRAINE	2
ARGENTINA	1
ARMENIA	1
CANADA	1
COLOMBIA	1
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	1
GERMANY	1
IRELAND	1
KAZAKHSTAN	1
NICARAGUA	1
PHILIPPINES	1
SOUTH AFRICA	1
SWEDEN	1
VENEZUELA	1



RING champion Yoan Pablo Hernandez hasn't fought much because of injuries.

Many of the best cruiserweights have quickly left the division behind over the years, moving up to heavyweight to face the big men, receive bigger paydays and never worry about making weight again. Tomasz Adamek, Steve Cunningham and David Haye are only three examples. These days, the top tier at 200 pounds includes men who've been there for some time. Only Marco Huck had a true dalliance when he fought Alexander Povetkin, losing controversially and then returning to defend his belt back here. He's far from the only familiar name to those who enjoy one of boxing's deeper weight classes.

THE STARS

If only RING and IBF champion Yoan Pablo Hernandez were around more often. Injuries have left him inactive, with 14 months between wins in 2012 and 2013. He only fought once last year, too, edging Firat Arslan, and has been out hurt again through 2015 so far. Hernandez's win over Steve Cunningham in 2012 was for the RING championship because Huck had moved to heavy. Huck has gone 4-0-1 since he returned, adding to a reign that includes another eight successful defenses and dates back to 2009. He had a contractual dispute in Europe and is now seeking to fight in the U.S.

BEST PUNCHER
DENIS LEBEDEV

BEST BOXER
YOAN PABLO HERNANDEZ

MOST PROTECTED
RAKHIM CHAKHKIEV

IS HE STILL AROUND?
ROY JONES JR.

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
MARCO HUCK VS. YOAN PABLO HERNANDEZ

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
ILUNGA MAKABU

MOST FUN TO WATCH
MARCO HUCK

ON THE WAY UP
OLEKSANDR USYK

ON THE WAY DOWN
OLA AFOLABI

BEST FIGHT OF 2014
YOAN PABLO HERNANDEZ SD 12 FIRAT ARSLAN

THE DEPTH

A man Huck beat back in 2010, Denis Lebedev, went on to win a belt of his own in 2012 and then lost a war with Guillermo Jones in 2013. But Jones tested positive for a banned substance after the fight and before a scheduled rematch. Lebedev didn't come back until last September, making quick work of Pawel Kolodziej and then outpointing Youri Kalenga this past April. Last year, Grigory Drozd outpointed another longstanding titleholder, Krzysztof Wlodarczyk, wresting his belt away and then defending it in May by stopping Lukasz Janik. Meanwhile, Victor Ramirez topped Ola Afolabi in April to become the mandatory IBF challenger once Hernandez returns or the new titleholder if he doesn't. Other contenders include Ilunga Makabu, who knocked out Thabiso Mchunu in May, and Rakhim Chakhkiev, winner of seven straight since Wlodarczyk gave him his lone defeat in 2013. On the fringe is Mateusz Masternak, who has losses to Drozd and Kalenga and a highly controversial defeat against Johnny Muller.

THE FUTURE

The winner of a bout between the long-frustrating BJ Flores, now 36, and former light heavyweight titleholder Beibut Shumenov won't be the future of the division. Nor will it be whichever cruiserweight cashes in next on the remnants of Roy Jones Jr. And while Tony Bellew is still attempting to establish himself at 200, more attention should go to guys like Dmitry Kudryashov, who has knocked out all 18 of his opponents, and Oleksandr Usyk, who is 7-0 after winning Olympic gold at heavyweight, where the limit is 200 pounds. Yunier Dorticos needs to step up his level of competition. And Dmytro Kucher is still rebuilding from a close loss to Makabu in 2013. ★

It's clear who the two best fighters are: Adonis Stevenson and Sergey Kovalev. What's not clear is which is the one true king. They are power punchers yet to reach a power-sharing agreement. Their wins provide plenty of reasons for fans to want to see them in the same ring. But the fighters and their teams keep finding different ways to avoid one another. While there are still other opponents available for each, the business of boxing for now will leave their rivalry as unfinished business.

BEST PUNCHER
SERGEY KOVALEV

BEST BOXER
SERGEY KOVALEV

MOST PROTECTED
MIKE LEE

IS HE STILL AROUND?
GLEN JOHNSON

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
ADONIS STEVENSON VS. SERGEY KOVALEV

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
JUERGEN BRAEHMER

MOST FUN TO WATCH
SERGEY KOVALEV

ON THE WAY UP
ARTUR BETERBIEV

ON THE WAY DOWN
GABRIEL CAMPILLO

BEST FIGHT OF 2014
TRAVIS DICKINSON TKO 6 MATTY CLARKSON

THE STARS

Stevenson became the RING champ when he blew out Chad Dawson in one round and then proceeded to plow through Tavoris Cloud and Tony Bellew to finish up his 2013. Yet he failed to capitalize in 2014, ducking a fight with Kovalev and departing for Showtime, where he visited the canvas in a decision win over Andrzej Fonfara, failed to seal deals to face Bernard Hopkins and Jean Pascal, and subsequently stayed busy with wins over Dmitry Sukhotsky in December and Sakio Bika in April.

Kovalev was left with few options after the Stevenson fight first fell through and kept active by dispatching Cedric Agnew and Blake Caparello. But then he lured Hopkins into the ring and out-boxed the master boxer in a great performance last November. Next, he stopped Jean Pascal in March. Kovalev had the leverage to make a Stevenson fight happen later in 2015 but, sadly, that's looking less likely now because his promoter, Main Events, insists that it take place on HBO.

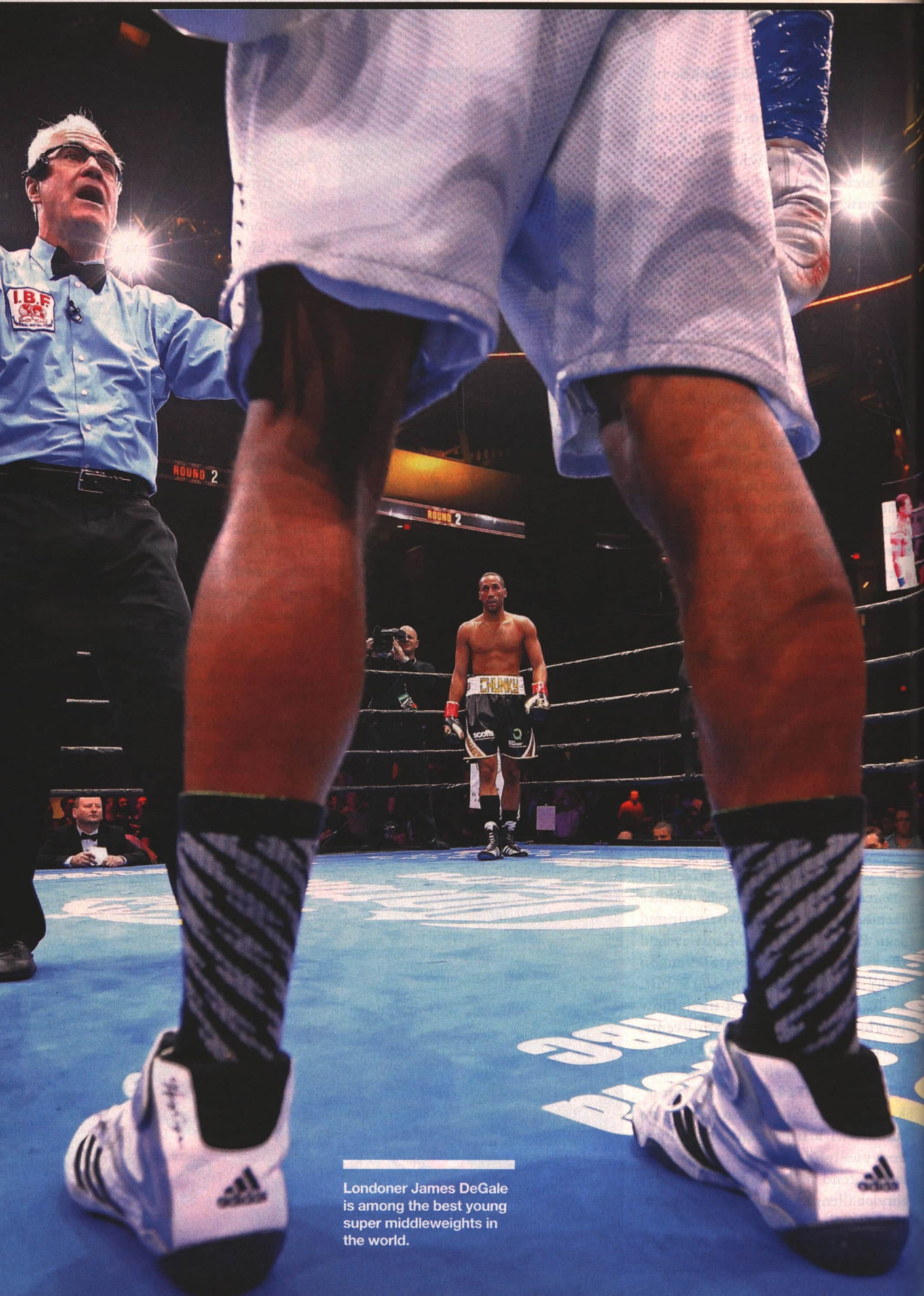
THE DEPTH

Kovalev and Stevenson belong to stables with other legitimate light heavyweight opponents. Kovalev will defend in July against mandatory challenger Nadjib Mohammedi, who has losses to Sukhotsky and Nathan Cleverly but is on a 13-fight winning streak. Main Events also has Isaac Chilemba and Sullivan Barrera. Stevenson could end up choosing from among those who also call Canada home (Artur Beterbiev, Eleider Alvarez or even Pascal) or have a rematch with fellow Haymon-signee Andrzej Fonfara, who stopped Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. in April. Meanwhile, in Germany, former titleholder Juergen Braehmer is now a 36-year-old contender content with remaining out of this conversation. Hopkins may have a farewell bout; otherwise, his loss to Kovalev effectively marked the end of his Hall of Fame career.

THE FUTURE

Beterbiev and Alvarez will move into the forefront first. There are also other undefeated prospects whose progress is worth monitoring: Marcus Browne, Yunieski Gonzalez, Olympic gold medalist Egor Mekhontsev, Olympic bronze medalist Oleksandr Gvozdyk, Trevor McCumby and Vyacheslav Shabranskyy. Thomas Williams Jr. and Thomas Oosthuizen are still looking to bounce back from disappointment while former beltholder Nathan Cleverly is returning from cruiserweight to 175, where he was last seen on the big stage getting obliterated by Kovalev in 2013. One name missing? Andre Ward, whose comeback was scheduled for June at 172 pounds. ★

Sergey Kovalev picked up where he left off in 2014 by stopping Jean Pascal in March.



Londoner James DeGale is among the best young super middleweights in the world.

Years ago, the Super Six World Boxing Classic was intended to inject life into the division in the wake of champion Joe Calzaghe's departure. It paired American and European boxers in bouts they might never have taken before. Since then, Andre Ward squandered the momentum that came with winning it all while his runner-up, Carl Froch, became an even bigger star. Meanwhile, we're once again seeing 168-pounders face top rivals, an unstructured and unofficial tournament that is nonetheless important with Froch mulling retirement and Ward potentially moving up to light heavyweight soon.

THE STARS

Ward has only fought twice since the Super Six wrapped in 2011, the result of an injury and attempts to part with promoter Dan Goossen, who has since passed away. Ward is now signed with Jay-Z's Roc Nation Sports and was set to face Paul Smith on June 20 at a catchweight of 172 pounds. Ward, who was stripped of his RING championship but still holds a world title, will decide which weight class he fights in afterward. Froch capitalized on a division without Ward and Calzaghe, winning a rematch with Mikkel Kessler in 2013 and then taking two fights over George Groves, with their sequel coming in front of an estimated 80,000 people in London. A long-discussed Ward-Froch rematch seems no closer to happening. Froch says he wants a big fight in Las Vegas but might call it a career.

THE DEPTH

Others have yet to ascend to those heights but are working their way up. Badou Jack outpointed Anthony Dirrell in April to win a world title. He owes a defense to mandatory challenger Groves, who has won two in a row since being laid out by Froch. James DeGale made a strong statement by outpointing Andre Dirrell, a former Super Six contestant himself, in May.

BEST PUNCHER
CARL FROCH

BEST BOXER
ANDRE WARD

MOST PROTECTED
ROCKY FIELDING

IS HE STILL AROUND?
FULGENCIO ZUNIGA

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
CARL FROCH VS. JULIO CESAR CHAVEZ JR.

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
GEORGE GROVES

MOST FUN TO WATCH
CARL FROCH

ON THE WAY UP
FEDOR CHUDINOV

ON THE WAY DOWN
FELIX STURM

BEST FIGHT OF 2014
ROBERT STIEGLITZ D 12
FELIX STURM

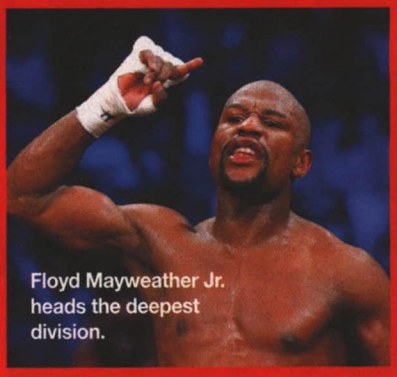
Arthur Abraham, who was in the Super Six as well, picked up a sanctioning-body title last year in a rubber match with Robert Stieglitz. He has successfully defended it three times since, including a pair of wins over Smith, and was scheduled to have a fourth bout with Stieglitz in July. Stieglitz and Felix Sturm fought to an entertaining draw last year.

THE FUTURE

Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. was set to move to 168 pounds in July after losing to Andrzej Fonfara at 172. It remains to be seen whether former titleholder Lucian Bute will return to super middleweight; he was last seen at 175 losing a one-sided bout to Jean Pascal. Fedor Chudinov topped Sturm in May. Meanwhile, some younger prospects might end up waiting for the bigger names to give them a chance. These up-and-comers include D'Mitrius Ballard, Jesse Hart, Gilberto Ramirez, Callum Smith and Tyron Zeuge. ★

RANKING THE DIVISIONS

THE WEIGHT CLASSES 1-17 BASED ON THE QUALITY AND DEPTH OF THE BOXERS



Floyd Mayweather Jr. heads the deepest division.

1. WELTERWEIGHT
2. FLYWEIGHT
3. FEATHERWEIGHT
4. JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT
5. CRUISERWEIGHT
6. LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT
7. JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT
8. JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT
9. MIDDLEWEIGHT
10. BANTAMWEIGHT
11. JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHT
12. JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT
13. HEAVYWEIGHT
14. SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT
15. JUNIOR FLYWEIGHT
16. STRAWWEIGHT
17. LIGHTWEIGHT

Gennady Golovkin evidently has everything it takes to soar except the opponents.

BEST PUNCHER:
GENNADY GOLOVKIN

BEST BOXER
GENNADY GOLOVKIN

MOST PROTECTED
DANNY JACOBS

IS HE STILL AROUND?
FERNANDO GUERRERO

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
MIGUEL COTTO VS. CANELO ALVAREZ

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
BILLY JOE SAUNDERS

MOST FUN TO WATCH
GENNADY GOLOVKIN

ON THE WAY UP
IEVGEN KHYTROV

ON THE WAY DOWN
DANIEL GEALE

BEST FIGHT OF 2014
DAVID LEMIEUX TKO 10 GABRIEL ROSADO

A fighter is best judged on who he has beaten and how. For a time, Gennady Golovkin was seen as a power-puncher who destroyed lesser men but had not yet proven himself against higher-caliber opponents. Now he is dominating better foes at 160. He can be judged on this and also on how few of his counterparts in the division want to face him. Miguel Cotto became the RING champion when he blasted through the damaged Sergio Martinez last year and he has been in no rush to defend against the person most deserving of a shot. Middleweight is in essence a story of Golovkin and the rest, though there are competitive fights that can be made once you go down the ranks.

THE STARS

Golovkin needed just three rounds to dispatch former titleholder Daniel Geale, less than two rounds for former challenger Marco Antonio Rubio, spent 11 rounds dominating a good contender in Martin Murray and then stayed active by stopping southpaw Willie Monroe Jr. in May, his 20th straight knockout. Cotto, meanwhile, avoided a showdown with Canelo Alvarez and returned after a year-long layoff against Geale in June, making his first defense of the 160-pound championship at a 157-pound catchweight. Canelo could be next for Cotto.

THE DEPTH

Andy Lee picked up a vacant title last year with a knockout of Matt Korobov, then fought to a draw in April against the belt's previous owner, an overweight Peter Quillin. Lee is a viable option for Golovkin, though a Quillin rematch would be enjoyable even if he can't make 160 anymore. It's also possible that Quillin could go ahead with what was long thought to be the plan, a fight with Danny Jacobs. The fellow Brooklynite and Al Haymon signee out-boxed and stopped Caleb Truax in April. Hassan N'Dam and David Lemieux were to fight for a vacant belt in June, with the winner another future option for Golovkin. Murray, the perpetual bridesmaid, may move up to 168. That's better than Jermain Taylor, who went from mystifyingly regaining a world title to losing it and possibly his mind after a pair of alleged criminal cases that could land him in prison.

THE FUTURE

Given the mediocrity of the division, it's difficult to know whether the prospects are guaranteed to replace the more established names or are merely destined to be listed alongside or even below them. That includes Billy Joe Saunders and Chris Eubank Jr.; they fought last year, Saunders winning a split decision. There's also 2012 Olympic gold medalist Ryota Murata, who is 7-0 as a pro but is 29 and needs to step up soon. Ievgen Khytrov had a very good amateur career and Hugo Centeno Jr., Antoine Douglas and Dominic Wade are still developing. ★

Two world titles here have belonged for some time to Floyd Mayweather Jr., who hasn't fought in the division since 2013. The biggest star at 154, Canelo Alvarez, doesn't have a belt to his name, has actually contested his last three outings at a catchweight of 155 and is seeking a shot at Miguel Cotto, who is the champion one division above. The rest at junior middleweight are a mix of younger names seeking either to cash in on the Alvarez sweepstakes soon or to gain a better foothold and greater recognition in preparation for his presumed eventual departure.

THE STARS

Canelo knocked James Kirkland cold in May, his third straight win since the loss to Mayweather. He wants Cotto, who is small for middleweight, and said he would prefer to wait until the right time to make the full move up to 160 were he to challenge Gennady Golovkin. You won't find much other star power in this division. The other major titleholders, not including Mayweather, are Demetrius Andrade and Cornelius Bundrage. Andrade has gone a year without fighting following his first defense over Brian Rose. He passed up a fight late last year with Jermell Charlo, unhappy with the terms, and has sat on the sideline since. Bundrage, part of one sanctioning body's carousel of lesser world champs, is due to face Jermall Charlo (Jermell's twin brother) next. Meanwhile, Erislandy Lara will likely see his secondary belt get an upgrade once Mayweather vacates his titles, as announced. Lara shut out Delvin Rodriguez in June.

THE DEPTH

The lower you go in the rankings, the more you find guys who previously held titles and/or are coming off significant losses. That includes Austin Trout (who has won three since dropping decisions to Alvarez and Lara), Vanes Martirosyan (last seen losing to Jermall Charlo) and the aforementioned Kirkland. Those guys may at least be able to rebuild and return as a B-side. Another big bout is far less likely for Joshua Clottey, Carlos Molina, Anthony Mundine and Ishe Smith.

BEST PUNCHER:
CANELO ALVAREZ

BEST BOXER
ERISLANDY LARA

MOST PROTECTED
DEMETRIUS ANDRADE

IS HE STILL AROUND?
GRADY BREWER

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
CANELO ALVAREZ VS. DEMETRIUS ANDRADE

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
JERMELL CHARLO

MOST FUN TO WATCH
JAMES KIRKLAND

ON THE WAY UP
JULIAN WILLIAMS

ON THE WAY DOWN
CARLOS MOLINA

BEST FIGHT OF 2014
ANDY LEE KO 5 JOHN JACKSON

Canelo Alvarez proved again against James Kirkland that he's a must-see attraction.

THE FUTURE

It's better, then, to look toward at least a few of the prospects to see if they pan out. Julian Williams is getting most of the attention. Terrell Gausha and Liam Smith are at least a couple of years behind him, as are Chris Pearson and Erickson Lubin. Tony Harrison was slated to face twice-beaten fringe prospect Willie Nelson in July on a Premier Boxing Champions card. Michel Soro is coming off a stoppage of Glen Tapia but hasn't returned to contention since losing to then-titleholder Zaurbek Baysangurov in 2011. Jack Culcay has won six straight since his lone pro loss. Damien Jonak remains unbeaten but needs to step up after 40 fights. Patrick Teixeira has knocked out 21 of his 25 opponents and recently signed with Golden Boy Promotions. ★

Floyd Mayweather Jr. left no doubt against Manny Pacquiao that he remains the best 147-pounder.

It only took around six years for the two best welterweights to fight. Floyd Mayweather Jr.'s win over Manny Pacquiao was huge financially for all involved. The aftermath will be good even for those who weren't. That's because Mayweather supposedly only has one fight left and plans on vacating his three world titles at 147 while Pacquiao is 36 years old and may not have much time left in the sport either. While this may seem like bad news for the many men who have held out hope for huge paydays against either, the vacuum left by these

two superstars means there will be a competition for attention and opportunities. This is a wonderfully deep division, after all, with more soon to join from 140.

THE STARS

If Mayweather sticks to his word, then his goodbye will be in September against an opponent who had not yet been named. Pacquiao underwent shoulder surgery and will be on the shelf for a bit. Even with the loss, he remains a big draw and should have little trouble finding a notable opponent in this division or at junior welterweight. Tim Bradley and 140-pounder Jessie Vargas were scheduled to fight in June. Keith Thurman will likely see his secondary belt get an upgrade; he was due to face Luis Collazo in July. Meanwhile, Kell Brook made the second defense of his world title at the end of May against Frankie Gavin. If Amir Khan doesn't get Mayweather's last fight, a Brook-Khan clash could be huge in the United Kingdom. Khan got past Chris Algieri in May.

THE DEPTH

Many at welterweight are with Al Haymon and his Premier Boxing Champions. Along with Thurman and Khan are Marcos Maidana, Shawn Porter, Devon Alexander, Robert Guerrero, Andre Berto and Victor Ortiz. Maidana hasn't returned since dropping a pair of decisions to Mayweather last year but would make for a highly entertaining brawl with Thurman. Porter, who lost his title to Brook last year, was to meet Adrien Broner in June at 144 pounds. Alexander needs to bounce back from losses to Porter in 2013 and Khan in 2014. Guerrero came back in June after losing a March battle with Thurman. A rematch of 2011's Ortiz-Berto brawl would have less on the line but could be just as much fun.

BEST PUNCHER
KEITH THURMAN

BEST BOXER
FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.

MOST PROTECTED
AMIR KHAN

IS HE STILL AROUND?
JUNIOR WITTER

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
KEITH THURMAN VS. MARCOS MAIDANA

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
AMIR KHAN

MOST FUN TO WATCH
MANNY PACQUIAO

ON THE WAY UP
ERROL SPENCE

ON THE WAY DOWN
ROBERT GUERRERO

BEST FIGHT OF 2014
ROBERT GUERRERO UD 12 YOSHIHIRO KAMEGAI

THE FUTURE

Here's where we discuss several questions and a handful of prospects. Will Juan Manuel Marquez fight again? How will Danny Garcia look against Paulie Malignaggi in August? When will Lamont Peterson also become a full-fledged 147-pounder? Where do non-Haymon fighters such as Diego Chaves and Brandon Rios fit in? Will Sadam Ali complete his ascent when he challenges the winner of Bradley-Vargas? And when will highly touted prospect Errol Spence start to step in with some of these names? Others working their way up with varying degrees of success include Egidijus Kavaliauskas, Konstantin Ponomarev, Alex Saucedo and Brad Solomon.★

LONGEST REIGNING TITLEHOLDERS

The list below showcases the sport's 10 most established titleholders (RING, IBF, WBA, WBC or WBO). Remarkably, half of last year's names have since suffered defeats: Sergio Martinez, Anselmo Moreno, Omar Narvaez, Miguel Vazquez and Krzysztof Wlodarczyk. Reigns are through June 14, 2015, and do not include interim titles or "regular" titles from a sanctioning body with a "super" titleholder. In other words, THE RING recognizes only one titleholder in each sanctioning body.

1. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO**
RING, IBF, WBA, WBO HEAVYWEIGHT
109 MONTHS

2. **MARCO HUCK**
WBO CRUISERWEIGHT
69 MONTHS

3. **ANDRE WARD**
WBA SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT
66 MONTHS

4. **TAKASHI UCHIYAMA**
WBA JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT
65 MONTHS

5. **YOAN PABLO HERNANDEZ**
RING, IBF CRUISERWEIGHT
44 MONTHS

6. **DONNIE NIETES**
RING, WBO JUNIOR FLYWEIGHT
44 MONTHS

7. **SHINSUKE YAMANAKA**
WBC BANTAMWEIGHT
43 MONTHS

8. **GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX**
RING, WBA, WBO JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT
40 MONTHS

9. **DANNY GARCIA**
RING, WBA JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT
38 MONTHS

10. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.**
RING, WBA, WBC JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT
37 MONTHS

This division tends to be packed full of talent that ultimately leaves because they cannot make 140 anymore or due to the temptation of big fights seven pounds north. RING champion Danny Garcia is facing Paulie Malignaggi at 147 in August. Lamont Peterson also seems closer than ever to leaving. But the division is not going to be left barren of star power. One big name has moved up from 135. One dropped down from 147. For the rest who have long been at 140, this is their time to show they deserve to remain in or rise to the spotlight.

THE STARS

It's no surprise that Garcia's moving up. He and Peterson fought in April at 143 pounds. Garcia was fortunate to leave with a close win and said dropping weight may have affected his performance. Peterson says he can still make 140 but wants to see how welterweight feels. With them gone, the de facto leader of the division would be Lucas Matthysse, who lost to Garcia and demolished Peterson. Matthysse was in the 2014 Fight of the Year with his stoppage of John Molina, stayed busy to wrap up the year and then had an enjoyable victory over Ruslan Provodnikov in April.

We could see Golden Boy's Matthysse face Viktor Postol for a vacant title or step in with Top Rank's ascendant star Terence Crawford, the former lightweight champion who knocked out Thomas Dulorme on the same day as Matthysse-Provodnikov. Omar Figueroa is another former 135-pound titleholder who moved up but he was overweight and then had difficulty at times in a decision over Ricky Burns in May. Adrien Broner went from 135 to 147 and then dropped to 140 following his loss to Marcos Maidana in 2013. He beat Carlos Molina, Emanuel Taylor and John Molina since, though his fight with Shawn Porter in June was at 144 pounds.

Terence Crawford has been as dominating as any fighter the past year and a half.

BEST PUNCHER
LUCAS MATTHYSSE

BEST BOXER
TERENCE CRAWFORD

MOST PROTECTED
CESAR CUENCA

IS HE STILL AROUND?
PAUL SPADAFORA

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
LUCAS MATTHYSSE VS. TERENCE CRAWFORD

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
LUCAS MATTHYSSE

MOST FUN TO WATCH
RUSLAN PROVODNIKOV

ON THE WAY UP
AMIR IMAM

ON THE WAY DOWN
JOHN MOLINA

BEST FIGHT OF 2014
LUCAS MATTHYSSE TKO 11 JOHN MOLINA

THE DEPTH

Provodnikov is a tough out, though it remains to be seen when the punishment he has taken will take its toll. Jessie Vargas finally took a clear decision in a noteworthy fight when he beat Antonio DeMarco last year and was due to step up to 147 in June for a fight with Tim Bradley. Cesar Cuenca and Ik Yang were expected to fight for a world title stripped from Peterson. Postol stepped aside as mandatory challenger to one of Garcia's belts and will likely fight for the now-vacant title against someone else. Mauricio Herrera is a gritty gatekeeper. And former 130-pound beltholder Rances Barthelemy will also be joining the party at 140.

THE FUTURE

The prospect crop includes Jose Benavidez, Amir Imam, Antonio Orozco, Mike Reed, Julian Rodriguez and, while unknown in the U.S., Eduard Troyanovsky of Russia. Less certain is Frankie Gomez, at least in this division, as he was massively overweight for a May fight with Humberto Soto. ★

There is little at lightweight worthy of excitement. Actually, even that's too generous. The best fighter, RING champion Terence Crawford, left for junior welterweight. Titleholder Omar Figueroa moved up as well in favor of a division with far more star power, potential paydays and leeway on the scales. What's left, then, are fighters whose shortcomings were quite visible in past losses or whose styles aren't quite the kind that would draw eyeballs to the 135-pound weight class.

THE STARS

Jorge Linares suffered consecutive stoppage losses to Antonio DeMarco in 2011 and Sergio Thompson in 2012 but has since won eight straight, picking up a vacant belt late last year with a knockout of Javier Prieto. He stopped Kevin Mitchell in his first defense, in May. Darleys Perez, who lost a decision to Yuriorkis Gamboa on HBO in 2013, was recently upgraded from being an interim titleholder to "full" status. He was expected to defend against Anthony Crolla in July. Mickey Bey, who was ahead on the scorecards when John Molina stopped him in the final round in 2013, went on to capture a belt from Miguel Vazquez by a controversial split decision last year. Bey has sat on the sideline since then, largely of his own doing, but was scheduled to defend in July against Denis Shafikov, who lost to Vazquez in 2014.

THE DEPTH

Gamboa seemed ready to move to junior lightweight after being stopped by Terence Crawford but could stick around for a Linares clash. Ray Beltran came in overweight before blowing out Takahiro Ao, said he was staying at 135, then signed to face Humberto Soto at 140. That fight fell through when Beltran failed a drug test, leaving Beltran's career in limbo. Richar Abril was stripped of his title after postponing bouts due to illness, ending an unceremonious reign. He hasn't been missed. Sharif Bogere has won four since losing to Abril but hasn't been back in the title picture yet. Vazquez returned from the Bey defeat with a decision over Jerry Belmontes in March. As wronged as he might feel, few are clamoring for him to get a rematch with Bey. Derry Matthews has nine losses but somehow might be in line for the winner of Perez-Crolla. And this July was scheduled to bring bout for a vacant title between undefeated fighters Terry Flanagan and Jose Zepeda.

THE FUTURE

If all of that left you down, then perk up at the prospect of Felix Verdejo, a stellar Puerto Rican who may be the island's next big star. He seems more of a sure thing in a division that has few of those. Ricky Burns may come back to lightweight, where he once held a belt, following his loss to a heavy Omar Figueroa. Others we're tracking: Richard Commey, Luke Campbell, Dierry Jean, Saul Rodriguez and Dejan Zlaticanin. ★

BEST PUNCHER
RICHARD COMMEY

BEST BOXER
JORGE LINARES

MOST PROTECTED
DERRY MATTHEWS

IS HE STILL AROUND?
DEMARCUS CORLEY

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
JORGE LINARES VS. YURIORKIS GAMBOA

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
YURIORKIS GAMBOA

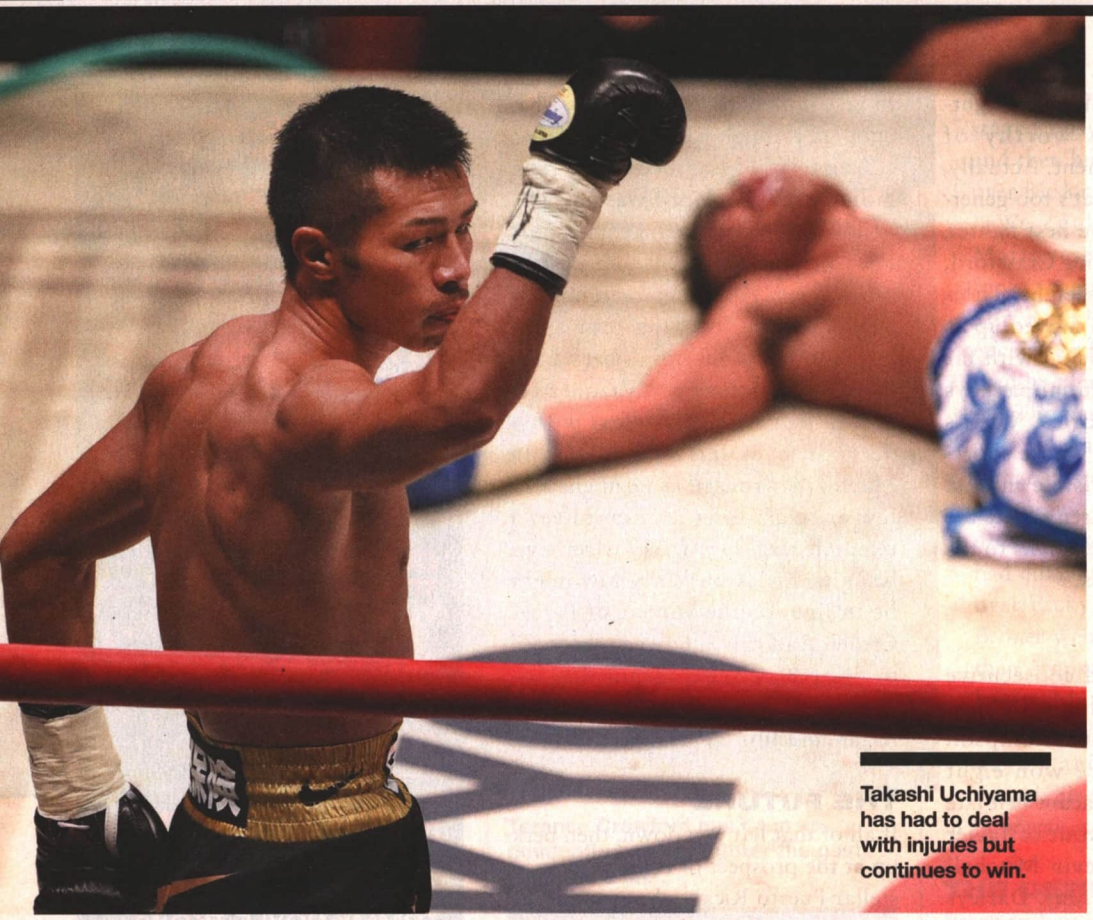
MOST FUN TO WATCH
JORGE LINARES

ON THE WAY UP
FELIX VERDEJO

ON THE WAY DOWN
PAULUS MOSES

BEST FIGHT OF 2014
TOMMY COYLE TKO 12 DANIEL BRIZUELA

Up-and-down Jorge Linares is on the most impressive run of his career.



Takashi Uchiyama has had to deal with injuries but continues to win.

The two men atop this division already faced each other in early 2011, back when Takashi Uchiyama was just wrapping up his first year as a titleholder while his countryman, Takashi Miura, was but a contender. Uchiyama stopped Miura, though Miura later went on to win a belt of his own. They've been circling each other since but have never had a rematch, instead remaining the fixtures in a division that has otherwise seen several fighters depart or defeated.

THE STARS

Uchiyama's reign of more than five years is one of the longest among current titleholders. He has won in nine of his defenses and had a 10th end on a technical draw due to a clash of heads. He was quite inactive in 2014, not fighting until the final day of the year. And while he returned this past May with a quick and easy win, Uchiyama will be sidelined again while he recovers from having cartilage taken out of his left elbow. Miura, meanwhile, has made four successful defenses of a title he won in 2013, including a decision over Sergio Thompson that year and a third-round technical knockout of Billy Dib in May.

BEST PUNCHER
TAKASHI UCHIYAMA

BEST BOXER
TAKASHI UCHIYAMA

MOST PROTECTED
ROMAIN JACOB

IS HE STILL AROUND?
CELESTINO CABALLERO

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
TAKASHI UCHIYAMA VS. TAKASHI MIURA II

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
JAVIER FORTUNA

MOST FUN TO WATCH
TAKASHI MIURA

ON THE WAY UP
FRANCISCO VARGAS

ON THE WAY DOWN
ORLANDO SALIDO

BEST FIGHT OF 2014
ORLANDO SALIDO TKO 11 TERDSAK KOKIETGYM

THE DEPTH

Roman Martinez had previously held a world title until Mikey Garcia took it in late 2013. Garcia has been inactive since early 2014. If he returns, he'll be heavier. Martinez remained, though, and topped Orlando Salido by decision in April to regain his belt. Salido, a gritty veteran who has revived his career on several occasions, might be on his way out. Jose Pedraza defeated Andrey Klimov in June, for a vacant title. The belt was previously held by Rances Barthelemy, who is jumping all the way to 140. Javier Fortuna outpointed Bryan Vasquez in a battle of talented, unbeaten boxer-punchers in May, leaving Fortuna in the thick of the title picture. Vasquez did well enough to remain a factor.

THE FUTURE

Francisco Vargas has put together a very good run in the latter stages of his development and, following recent stoppage wins over Juan Manuel Lopez and Will Tomlinson, seems on the verge of challenging for a title. Less so are some other prospects whose progress we're monitoring, including Joel Diaz Jr., Romain Jacob, Rikki Naito, Carlos Ramirez and Liam Walsh. ★

This is one of those divisions where boxing's various cold wars have prevented matchups between some of the best 126-pounders in the world — Nonito Donaire vs. Abner Mares in the past and current fights between titleholders and contenders within Al Haymon's ranks (Gary Russell Jr. and Mares) against those in Top Rank's stable (Vasyl Lomachenko and Nicholas Walters). Fortunately there are still intriguing pairings to be made. That's a good thing in a division that has otherwise been a revolving door in recent years, losing stars and stalwarts to defeat and/or migration to other weight classes.

THE STARS

Lomachenko quickly recovered after his close and competitive loss to the heavy, dirty Orlando Salido, outclassing Russell to win a world title. Lomachenko has defended it twice under a spotlight befitting Top Rank's faith in him on undercards to Manny Pacquiao-Chris Algieri and Floyd Mayweather Jr.-Pacquiao. Now he awaits another top opponent. Russell bounced back not long after the Lomachenko loss, obliterating Jhonny Gonzalez to pick up a belt of his own. That could be a turning point for a fighter who had failed to live up to his potential in the Olympics and during his frustratingly gradual pro development.

Walters also blew fans away when he powered through Donaire in late 2014. Alas, he came in heavy and dropped his title at the scales before beating Miguel Marriaga in June. He might need to move up. Lee Selby emerged as a player by taking the title off Evgeny Gradovich in May. Mares hasn't done much since losing to Gonzalez in one round in 2013, staying busy with three wins and waiting for Haymon to put him in with Russell or, perhaps, rising 122-pounder Leo Santa Cruz.

BEST PUNCHER
NICHOLAS WALTERS

BEST BOXER
VASYL LOMACHENKO

MOST PROTECTED
ABNER MARES

IS HE STILL AROUND?
FERNANDO MONTIEL

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
NICHOLAS WALTERS VS. VASYL LOMACHENKO

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
SIMPIWE VETYEKA

MOST FUN TO WATCH
NICHOLAS WALTERS

ON THE WAY UP
JESUS CUELLAR

ON THE WAY DOWN
JHONNY GONZALEZ

BEST FIGHT OF 2014
NICHOLAS WALTERS TKO 6 NONITO DONAIRE

THE DEPTH

There isn't much star value after the aforementioned fighters, though this second tier shouldn't be ignored. Jesus Cuellar has stopped Juan Manuel Lopez and Vic Darchinyan. With Walters dropping his belt, Cuellar was upgraded to a full titleholder. Simpiwe Vetyeka ended Chris John's career and then had his title dubiously taken away in a technical-decision loss to Donaire. Marvin Sonsona's knockout of Akifumi Shimoda was one of 2014's best; he followed that with revenge over Wilfredo Vazquez Jr. Don't be deceived by the 10 losses on Robinson Castellanos's record; he has recent victories over Celestino Caballero and Rocky Juarez. And Velez had to settle for a draw with Gradovich last year but showed significant strides in his development.

THE FUTURE

Last year, this section listed many of the names you saw above. This year, the prospects are less certain. The next tier includes Satoshi Hosono, who lost to Caballero in 2011 and had a headbutt-shortened technical draw with John in 2013. They are followed by young unbeatens like Andres Gutierrez, Abraham Lopez, Julian Ramirez, Mitchell Smith, Oscar Valdez, and Josh Warrington.★

Vasyl Lomachenko is one of the fastest-rising young stars in the world.

Guillermo Rigondeaux (right) might not be fun to watch but he's effective.

As is often the case in boxing, the scene at 122 is somehow both exciting and frustrating. The best boxer in the division, Guillermo Rigondeaux, is also among the best in the entire sport. He is at times untouchable in the ring yet is also now seen as untouchable by major promoters and networks. It seems no one wants to fight or feature him. Meanwhile, Carl Frampton and Scott Quigg are two undefeated stars in the United Kingdom but they've not been able to reach an agreement to fight each other. One current titleholder's frustrating time in the division appears to be ending, while a former titleholder has decided to return.

THE STARS

Rigondeaux, last seen on American airwaves at the end of 2013, fought in China and Japan last year, taking out Sod Kokietgym in one round and then coming off the canvas twice to score a technical knockout over Hisashi Amagasa. A disagreement with his manager may be one reason he hasn't had a fight in 2015. The same can't be said for Frampton, whose first title defense brought a stoppage of Chris Avalos in February. Frampton signed with Al Haymon in May. Quigg was set to appear in July against a former Frampton foe, Kiko Martinez. Sadly, none of these three ever stepped in with Leo Santa Cruz, who seems set to jump to 126 after less than two years at 122 and four successful title defenses against largely lower-level opponents.

BEST PUNCHER
NONITO DONAIRE

BEST BOXER
GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX

MOST PROTECTED
LEO SANTA CRUZ

IS HE STILL AROUND?
BERNABE CONCEPCION

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
CARL FRAMPTON VS. SCOTT QUIGG

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
SCOTT QUIGG

MOST FUN TO WATCH
CARL FRAMPTON

ON THE WAY UP
ALBERT PAGARA

ON THE WAY DOWN
CESAR SEDA

BEST FIGHT OF 2014
JOSE LOPEZ MD 8 ROBERTO CASTANEDA

THE DEPTH

It'll be interesting to see where Nonito Donaire fits in. He reigned here in 2012 before running into Rigondeaux in 2013. A stoppage loss to Nicholas Walters last year sent Donaire back to junior featherweight; he won one bout in March and was set to stay busy in July. From here, the depth quickly goes down to less-proven contenders and rising prospects. Hugo Ruiz moved up to 122 and is in line for a world-title shot. Shingo Wake lost four times earlier in his career but is moving into contention. Tyson Cave lost a controversial decision to Oscar Escandon last year but has won two since. Escandon, meanwhile, went on to drop a split decision to undefeated Moises Flores in April.

THE FUTURE

Kid Galahad is another standout in the U.K., though he's facing a two-year suspension after testing positive for a banned steroid, which the fighter says came from his brother spiking his drink. Others potentially on the cusp include Manuel Avila, Jessie Magdaleno, Albert Pagara, Genesis Servania and Rey Vargas. Most of those names were also listed here last year, which means they haven't lost yet. But while they're farther advanced than prospects mentioned in other divisions, they also haven't broken out into true contender status. ★

The second-longest active title reign in boxing for much of the past year was that of Anselmo Moreno, who'd held his belt for more than six years and, except for a loss very early in his career, had only been defeated when he jumped up to 122 pounds and faced Abner Mares. But then Moreno came out flat and lost in a cut-shortened bout. The man who beat Moreno, Juan Carlos Payano, has yet to capitalize. In his place is someone else who stands out clearly among his fellow 118-pounders, though it's fair to say that Shinsuke Yamanaka isn't new to the division.

BEST PUNCHER
SHINSUKE YAMANAKA

BEST BOXER
SHINSUKE YAMANAKA

MOST PROTECTED
RAU'SHEE WARREN

IS HE STILL AROUND?
MALCOLM TUNACAO

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
SHINSUKE YAMANAKA VS. TOMOKI KAMEDA

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
JAMIE MCDONNELL

MOST FUN TO WATCH
SHINSUKE YAMANAKA

ON THE WAY UP
JULIO CEJA

ON THE WAY DOWN
ANSELMO MORENO

BEST FIGHT OF 2014
RODRIGO GUERRERO TKO 7 DANIEL ROSAS

THE STARS

Yamanaka has shown skill and power while making eight successful title defenses (six by knockout) over the past three and a half years. His opponents tend not only to taste leather but the canvas as well. Payano's activity helped him top Moreno but he has been inactive since, an undefeated fighter unable to capitalize off the biggest win of his career. The same can be said for Randy Caballero, who outpointed Stuart Hall last October to win a title but suffered an injury before his first defense. Tomoki Kameda, part of a trio of star Japanese brothers, voluntarily dropped his title in order to challenge for Jamie McDonnell's secondary belt. McDonnell won a narrow decision in May and a rematch could be in order.

THE DEPTH

The belt left behind by Kameda could end up in the hands of the winner of a fight between Ryo Akaho, whose lone loss came in a title bout at 115 pounds in 2012, and Pungluang Sor Singyu, a former titleholder who lost to Paulus Ambunda in 2013 and then was knocked out by Kameda last year. Julio Ceja's lone loss came via majority decision against McDonnell back in 2013; he has won five since (four by knockout) and is ready to step back up. Also in the picture is Lee Haskins, who has three defeats on his record but stopped Ryosuke Iwasa in June, earning a title shot against Caballero. Moreno hasn't returned and, if he does, it's uncertain whether it'll be at 118 or 122.

THE FUTURE

Yamanaka and Kameda are the top bantamweights in Japan but that country also is home to a pair of up-and-comers in Ryo Matsumoto and Shohei Omori. Russia has Nikolay Potapov, who hasn't demonstrated much power of late, with all of his past five wins going the full 10 or 12 rounds. American Olympian Rau'shee Warren also tends to go the distance. While he only turned pro in 2012, Warren is now 28 years old and should step up his level of competition soon. ★

Shinsuke Yamanaka has overwhelmed his opponents with both skill and power.

Naoya Inoue (left) has made a very big impression in a short time.

A division that rarely receives attention suddenly wound up in the spotlight at the end of last year when Naoya Inoue, a prodigious 108-pound titleholder, jumped up in what was just his eighth pro fight to take on Omar Narvaez, a longtime titleholder who sat atop the rankings. Narvaez was a very good boxer who had become content with facing lower-tier opposition. Inoue promptly deposed him, scoring a stunning second-round knockout and bringing potential to the division. Alas, that big shakeup hasn't led to any great rumbles since. More attention will be paid to the deep 112-pound weight class until the combustible elements at 115 decide to mix it up among themselves or even with their flyweight brethren.

THE STARS

One issue is that Inoue hurt his hand during his win over Narvaez and spent the first half of 2015 on the sideline. He's expected to return later in the year against the winner of a bout between David Carmona and Warlito Parrenas. Carlos Cuadras has a fan-friendly style, is undefeated and has been a titleholder for a little more than a year. His last defense came in an April win. Zolani Tete won a belt last year, held onto it in March with a stoppage of Paul Butler and then vacated it as he was unhappy with the money offered for a defense against mandatory challenger McJoe Arroyo. Kohei Kono regained a world title last year and held onto it with a draw on New Year's Eve. His 2015 debut will be against countryman Koki Kameda, the popular Japanese fighter who dropped down from bantamweight last year.

THE DEPTH

Arroyo and Arthur Villanueva will fight for Tete's vacant title. Srisaket Sor Rungvisai lost his belt to Cuadras via technical decision thanks to a headbutt and stopped Jose Salgado in May. Akira Yaegashi, the former 105-pound titleholder and 112-pound champ, is coming off a pair of technical knockout losses — one to Roman Gonzalez at flyweight, the other to Pedro Guevara at 108. He came to this division in May and might feel that adding weight to his frame will revive his career. No official word yet on when Narvaez will come back and, if so, in which division that will be. Felipe Orucuta, who gave Narvaez two competitive outings, returned at bantamweight in April but would be welcome here again.

THE FUTURE

Even if Narvaez hadn't been deposed, there was already a youth movement under way. Among the prospects presently fighting in this division are Sho Ishida, Ivan Morales, David Sanchez, Rex Tso, and Inoue's younger brother, 19-year-old Takuma. Many hail from the same countries as the other titleholders and contenders so their opportunities may be coming in the not-too-distant future. ★

BEST PUNCHER
NAOYA INOUE

BEST BOXER
ZOLANI TETE

MOST PROTECTED
OLEYDONG SITHSAMERCHAI

IS HE STILL AROUND?
JULIO CESAR MIRANDA

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
NAOYA INOUE VS. CARLOS CUADRAS

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
ARTHUR VILLANUEVA

MOST FUN TO WATCH
NAOYA INOUE

ON THE WAY UP
DAVID SANCHEZ

ON THE WAY DOWN
OMAR NARVAEZ

BEST FIGHT OF 2014
CARLOS CUADRAS TD 8 SRISAKET SOR RUNGVISAI

The idea that there were great fighters to watch and fantastic matches to be made at 112 pounds wasn't new to the rest of the world and to America's hardcore boxing fans. Yet the major networks in the United States almost never gave attention to flyweights anymore, except when Jorge Arce, Vic Darchinyan and Nonito Donaire were there. That is now changing. Zou Shiming, a two-time Olympic gold medalist who was a staple of HBO2's occasional Macau broadcasts, inadvertently brought attention to the Thai titleholder Amnat Ruenroeng. A far bigger HBO spotlight came in May for Roman Gonzalez, whose arrival and ascent here has added to a division that was already fascinating and entertaining.

THE STARS

Gonzalez, a former titleholder at 105 and 108, moved up in 2013 and then faced RING champion Akira Yaegashi last September, taking him out in nine rounds in impressive fashion. Three fights later he was on HBO, needing less than two rounds to take out a respectable contender in Edgar Sosa. While a post-fight interview focused on 115-pound titleholder Naoya Inoue, there should also be movement toward a rematch with Juan Francisco Estrada. Gonzalez topped Estrada by decision at 108 pounds in 2012. Estrada went on to win a pair of belts from Brian Viloria at 112 and has made five successful defenses since. Viloria's now 34 but has bounced back with three victories of his own. Ruenroeng poses a difficult style for his opponents; he was due to make his fourth title defense in June against former 108-pound beltholder Johnriel Casimero.

BEST PUNCHER
ROMAN GONZALEZ

BEST BOXER
ROMAN GONZALEZ

MOST PROTECTED
NAWAPHON POR CHOKCHAI

IS HE STILL AROUND?
LUIS LAZARTE

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
ROMAN GONZALEZ VS. JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA II

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
KAZUTO IOKA

MOST FUN TO WATCH
ROMAN GONZALEZ

ON THE WAY UP
MCWILLIAMS ARROYO

ON THE WAY DOWN
EDGAR SOSA

BEST FIGHT OF 2014
JOMAR FAJARDO D 10 FRANCISCO RODRIGUEZ

THE DEPTH

You could also put any of the above with any of the below. Kazuto Ioka lost his title to Ruenroeng last year but won a secondary belt with a close decision over Juan Carlos Reveco this past April. McWilliams Arroyo also lost narrowly to Ruenroeng last year and need not be written off yet either. Moruti Mthalane is a former titleholder who got stopped by Donaire in 2008 but has won eight straight since. Sosa couldn't hang with Gonzalez but may make for competitive fights with others. The same could be said for Giovani Segura, who was stopped by Estrada last year and also was defeated by Sosa and Viloria.

THE FUTURE

If you couldn't tell, many of the best now at flyweight came up from lighter divisions. Moises Fuentes, former 105-pound titleholder and 108-pound challenger, could be next. These also are a few prospects now competing at 112, even if those who do become something will eventually seek some mercy from the scale: Nawaphon Por Chokchai, Kevin Satchell and Makazole Tete. ★

Roman Gonzalez has made it fashionable to appreciate the little guys.

Donnie Nietes has been as successful at 108 pounds as he was at 105.

Predicting the future at 108 can feel as futile as developing an emotional attachment to a pet goldfish: They don't stick around long at junior flyweight, leaving to swim in the bigger ponds at 112 and sometimes even at 115. In the past year, titleholders Johnriel Casimero and Naoya Inoue added themselves to a long list of departures that also includes Roman Gonzalez, Juan Francisco Estrada, Moises Fuentes, Adrian Hernandez, Kazuto Ioka, Giovani Segura, Edgar Sosa and Brian Viloria. The one constant seems to be Donnie Nietes, whose reign since late 2011 is longer than those of the three other titleholders combined.

THE STARS

Nietes, who came to 108 after three years with a belt at 105, has gone 5-0-1 in his defenses. That draw came in a stiff challenge from Moises Fuentes, whom Nietes subsequently knocked out in their rematch last year. Nietes was expected to battle next with Francisco Rodriguez, a former titleholder at 105 who had enjoyable wars last year with Katsunari Takayama and Jomar Fajardo. Javier Mendoza won his belt in September by outpointing Ramon Hirales and defeated Milan Melindo by a technical decision in his first defense in May. Ryoichi Taguchi picked up a title in December in a decision over Alberto Rossel and went on to stop Kwanthai Sithmorseng in May. Pedro Guevara earned a vacant belt late last year when he knocked out former 105-pound titleholder and 112-pound champ Akira Yaegashi, made quick work of Richard Claveras in April and was expected to make another defense in July against Ganigan Lopez.

THE DEPTH

Melindo's technical-decision loss to Mendoza was ugly but didn't remove him from contention. Jonathan Taconing's recent outings have seen him weigh in around 110 and 111 pounds but he's in position to challenge for Guevara's title. Randy Petalcorin has only one loss from very early in his career and also is due for a title shot. The same can be said for Raul Garcia, who dropped a split decision to Guevara in 2013 and whose other defeats came at 105 pounds, via split decisions to titleholders Fuentes in 2011 and Nkosinathi Joyi in 2010.

THE FUTURE

Right now at 108 those with undefeated records tend to have less impressive ledgers than those who've stepped in tough. So while Paipharob Kokietgym is unblemished after 29 fights, we wait to see how he does when he's in against a higher level of competition. Until then, the future at junior flyweight is likely to be part of the usual feeder system, with former 105-pounders making a pit stop on their way to 112. One possible entry from that pipeline: Kosei Tanaka, who captured a title at strawweight in May in his fifth pro fight.★

BEST PUNCHER
RANDY PETALCORIN

BEST BOXER
DONNIE NIETES

MOST PROTECTED
PAIPHAROB KOKIETGYM

IS HE STILL AROUND?
ALBERTO ROSSEL

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
DONNIE NIETES VS. PEDRO GUEVARA

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
RANDY PETALCORIN

MOST FUN TO WATCH
DONNIE NIETES

ON THE WAY UP
FRANCISCO RODRIGUEZ

ON THE WAY DOWN
ALBERTO ROSSEL

BEST FIGHT OF 2014
DONNIE NIETES TKO 9 MOISES FUENTES

A decade ago this division was best known for the virtuoso boxing of such light hitters as Ivan Calderon. That's not true anymore. While there's still the skilled approach of titleholder Hekkie Budler, there have been a number of entertaining fights and fighters at 105 in recent years. That includes one of the best battles of 2014, Francisco Rodriguez's war with Katsunari Takayama. While Rodriguez has since departed for a higher weight class, Takayama has regained a title and is joined by Wanheng Menayothin, an undefeated Thai titleholder with 38 pro fights, and Kosei Tanaka, an undefeated Japanese titleholder with five pro fights.

THE STARS

Budler came to 105 after dropping a split decision at 108 in 2011. That was his lone defeat. Since then he's rattled off 11 straight wins, picking up a vacant belt last year and defending it three times, including a February decision over Jesus Silvestre and an October points win against former titleholder Xiong Zhao Zhong. Takayama first held a belt a decade ago and is still around, now in this third reign, quickly rebounding after the grueling loss to Rodriguez. Menayothin, for all his pro fights, only stepped up late last year when he stopped titleholder Oswaldo Novoa and has made two successful defenses since. Tanaka is far more ambitious: He took out undefeated Ryuji Hara in October and then outpointed Julian Yedras for a vacant title this past May.

THE DEPTH

The wonderfully named Knockout CP Freshmart took a close decision over Carlos Buitrago in October and then outpointed ancient former titleholder Muhammad Rachman in March. While the Thai fighter is still early in his career, that hasn't stopped others from challenging for (and winning) titles, as we saw with Tanaka. Buitrago bounced back from the defeat with a decision over fading former beltholder Mario Rodriguez. Hara returned from the Tanaka loss by taking easy work up at flyweight; it remains to be seen whether he'll drop back down. Others are on a clearer downslope: Fahlan Sakkreerin, Novoa, Silvestre and Zhong.

BEST PUNCHER
KOSEI TANAKA

BEST BOXER
HEKKIE BUDLER

MOST PROTECTED
WANHENG MENAYOTHIN

IS HE STILL AROUND?
MUHAMMAD RACHMAN

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
HEKKIE BUDLER VS. KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
KNOCKOUT CP FRESHMART

MOST FUN TO WATCH
HEKKIE BUDLER

ON THE WAY UP
ALEXIS DIAZ

ON THE WAY DOWN
OSWALDO NOVOA

BEST FIGHT OF 2014
FRANCISCO RODRIGUEZ JR. UD 12 KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA

THE FUTURE

Among those we're watching are Alexis Diaz, Byron Rojas and Takumi Sakae. Diaz has fought as high as junior bantamweight and has been at or around strawweight for a little more than a year now. Rojas dropped a pair of split decisions in 2012 but has won nine since. Sakae is another up-and-comer from Japan, which has produced plenty of talent in these lighter divisions.★

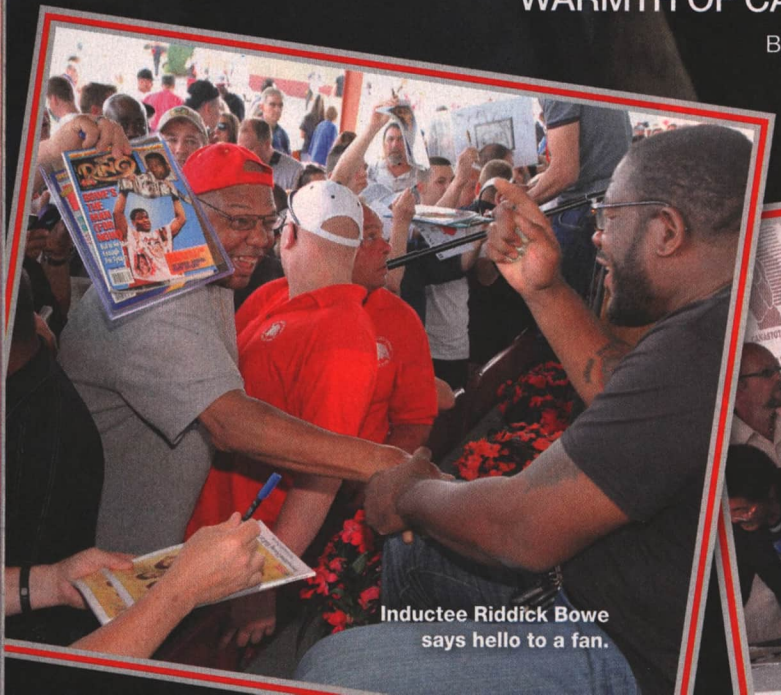
Hekkie Budler (left) won the vacant WBA title by stopping Karluis Diaz last year.

HALL OF FAME 2015

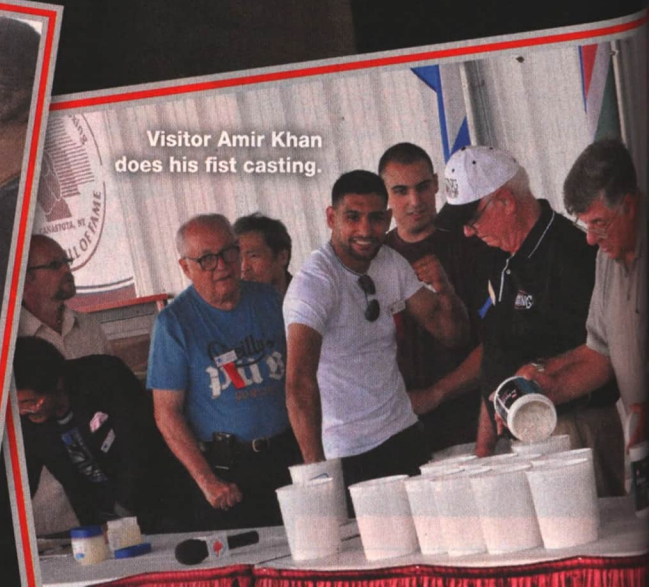
THE MAGIC WEEKEND

FROM FANS TO INDUCTEES, THE HALL OF FAME FESTIVITIES AND WARMTH OF CANASTOTANS CAPTURE HEARTS

By **Bernard Fernandez** • Photographs by **Jeff Julian**



Inductee Riddick Bowe says hello to a fan.



Visitor Amir Khan does his fist casting.

First-time visitors to the International Boxing Hall of Fame, especially those who have stepped inside the ropes and had a taste of glory, arrive in the central New York village of Canastota (population: 4,000) and it's like a child's initial exposure to Disney World. Their eyes widen, their heartstrings are tugged and they instantly fall under the spell of a place that has become, in its own way, the epicenter of boxing, particularly during four magical days in June. And they leave determined to come again.

Take Yoko Gushiken, the former WBA junior flyweight champion from Japan who fought from 1974 to '81. Gushiken, who turned 60 just 12 days after the IBHOF's Class of 2015 was inducted on June 14, had never fought outside of Asia and wasn't quite sure what to expect when he arrived in Canastota on June 11. But he was greeted almost as a conquering hero by attendees who probably never had seen him in action, even on YouTube, and the love that the locals (and fight fans in general, regardless of where they came from) showered upon him left a deep and indelible impression.

"I will never forget this wonderful day," Gushiken, the "Fierce Eagle" who was inducted in the Old-Timer category, said in halting English during his turn at the podium. "I would like to go back to Japan and tell everyone how great it was here."

Gushiken has vowed to return to Canastota for more induction weekends, as did another first-timer, former WBC cruiserweight champion Marvin Camel. Although Camel, 63, holds the distinction of being the first man to have become a world titlist in the newly created cruiserweight division, he is mostly known to customers of

Ray Mancini makes his induction speech.

Class of 2015 inductees show off their Hall of Fame rings. From left, Rafael Mendoza, Jim Lampley, Steve Smoger, Riddick Bowe, Ray Mancini and Nigel Collins.

his lawn-care business in Orlando, Florida, as the guy who cuts their grass. In Canastota, he again felt the rush of what it is like to be a world champion and besieged for autographs by boxing buffs who arrive like pilgrims for the opportunity to brush against the great and near-great of the ring.

"This place feels like ... home," said Camel, the only native Montanan to have won a world championship. One of several "special guests" who added additional star power to induction weekend, Camel and his wife, Norma, said their first trip to Canastota won't be their last.

Former WBA lightweight champion Ray "Boom Boom" Mancini and two-time former heavyweight titlist Riddick "Big Daddy" Bowe, two of the three Modern inductees this year, had made it to Canastota in the past but being a special guest is not the same as being enshrined. Each clearly reveled in his big moment, as did fellow living inductees Jim Lampley and Nigel Collins (Observer category) and Steve Smoger and Rafael Mendoza (Non-Participant). Former WBO, WBC and IBF featherweight champ "Prince" Naseem Hamed conveyed his regrets, explaining that his reason for not attending was a medical situation involving his wife, Eleasha.

Posthumous selections were middleweight Ken Overlin, Japanese flyweight Masao Ohba and longtime Madison Square Garden publicist John F.X. Condon.

Mancini was the last newly minted Hall of Famer to speak, an honor usually reserved for those perceived as induction weekend's prime attraction. That Mancini, 54, closed the show might be because he was one of boxing's most reliable draws on network television (CBS) in the 1980s. And it might be because of his compelling backstory, capped by winning the world championship that eluded his now-deceased father, Lenny "Boom Boom" Mancini, whose status as a rising lightweight contender was derailed when he was hit by shrapnel from a German mortar in France in World War II. "Boom Boom" the Younger credited family – past and present – and his gritty Rust Belt hometown with making him who and what he is.

"I'm sitting here thinking, 'Man, this ain't bad for a kid from the south side of Youngstown, Ohio," said Mancini (29-5, 23 KOs), who was introduced with heartfelt emotion by his sons, Ray Jr. and Leonardo.

"My mother and father made me believe I could be anything I wanted to be," he continued. "The only restrictions you have are the ones you put on yourself."

Holding up his Hall of Fame ring, Mancini said, "Tomorrow it will be [my sons']. I want it to be a reminder to them to dream big, to chase those dreams and realize that those dreams can come true. I'm living proof of that."

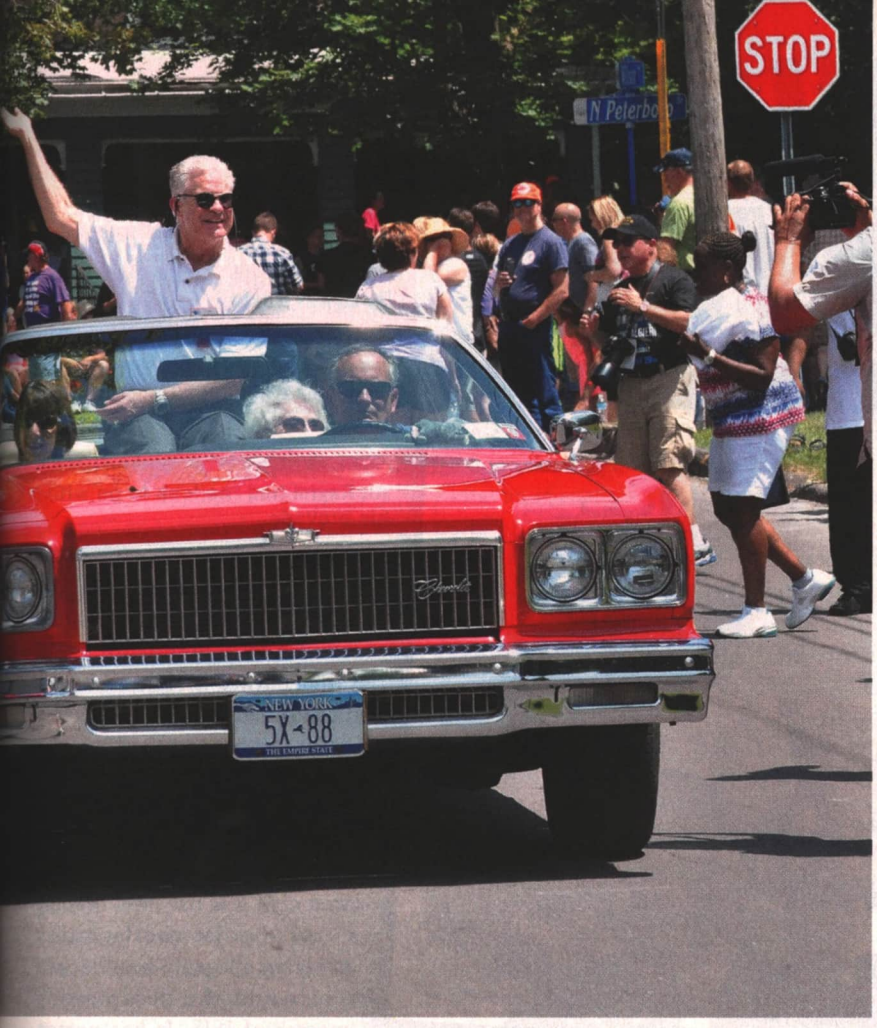
The 46-year-old Bowe, 6 feet 5 inches and 235 pounds or so during his prime, appears to have added at least 70 pounds and maybe more since his retirement, but one thing that has remained intact is his jovial and playful disposition.

"I forgot what I was gonna say," said Bowe (43-1, 33 KOs). "I thought about this for years. I'm finally here and guess what? I don't know what to say. But what I will say is that I had a wonderful career. God is good.

"It's so great seeing all of you guys involved in boxing. Jake LaMotta. Guys I used to watch when I was small, like Pipino Cuevas. He never knew I watched him but this is my first time seeing him. He didn't look at me right upstairs so I might hit him with a hook." The crowd erupted in laughter, as did Cuevas, who might not have understood every word but obviously got the gist of the good-natured dig.

LaMotta, the former middleweight champion who was part of the first induction class in 1990, and 1996 inductee Aaron Pryor are representative of the magnetic pull of the IBHOF on those who annually return to Canastota like swallows to Capistrano.

The "Raging Bull," who turned 94 on July 10, is the oldest living IBHOF enshrinee and his presence annually graces induction weekend. Fans and even other Hall of Famers gather around him as if he were some sort of Pied Piper, perhaps because other iconic figures who were popular staples of the festivities – former welterweight and middleweight champion Carmen Basilio, the Canastota native who was largely responsible for the IBHOF's existence, legendary trainer Angelo Dundee and former RING editor Bert Sugar – have taken their eternal 10-counts. Their absence has left a void that can only be filled by other familiar faces, like Pryor, the former WBA and IBF super lightweight champion whose appearance this year marked his 20th consecutive trip to a place he has come to love, and which has come to love him back.



Lampley acknowledges the crowd during the Parade of Champions.

"It's like a dream that comes true every time I'm here," Pryor said in 2013. "You can get hooked. If you come once, you're probably going to come year after year after year. To me, it's one of the greatest feelings you could ever have to come to this special place. I look forward to it like a little kid looks forward to Christmas. The fans here just take you in. They embrace you.

"If the Hall of Fame was in, say, New York City, I don't think it would feel the same. Too many different things to do or see there. Here, it's all about boxing for these four days."

Lampley, 66, began his network television career in the early 1970s as a sideline reporter for ABC's coverage of college football but he noted that boxing has always been his first and greatest love in the sporting universe. He called about 40 bouts for ABC's "Wide World of Sports" before moving on to HBO in 1988, where he has become arguably the most easily identifiable voice of boxing and a bastion of personal integrity. He was, not unexpectedly, gracious toward his fellow inductees, all of whom he said he owed a debt to in one form or another.

"I would not be standing here today if it were not for the memories that Riddick Bowe and 'Prince' Naseem Hamed provided," he said. "I might not have appealingly described them if I hadn't been watching and listening when Ray Mancini was delivering incomparable thrills before I began calling fights."

Lampley went on to describe Collins, a two-term editor of THE RING, as a "mentor" and he cited Smoger as having instructed him on the finer points of refereeing, enabling him to speak with better perspective on those who serve as the third man in the ring.

Collins, 68, the 2007 winner of the James J. Walker Award for long and meritorious service to boxing from the Boxing Writers Association of America, said he was honored to have borne witness to so many great fights and fighters.

"None of this would be possible without the fighters," he said. "We'd all be unemployed. Those are the people that I owe the most to. They took the punches, they suffered the consequences. I just chronicled what they did. I feel that I'm in a different league. I can't even compare to any of those."

Born in Bristol, England – "It's famous for three bare-knuckle world champions in a row. They haven't had a lot of good fighters since then," he cracked – Collins, who boxed as an amateur in the U.S. Army, said induction into the IBHOF is as close to immortality as it ever gets for anyone involved in the fight game.

"It's great to be honored for how you spent your entire working life," he said prior to the induction ceremony. "After I'm dead and gone, there'll be that plaque on the wall in Canastota, in the same building where all my boxing heroes have their plaques."

Smoger, 65, has refereed fights in 36 foreign countries and 26 U.S. states, making him the most traveled and licensed referee, he said, in boxing history. Still active, he figures there's still room in his well-stamped passport for additional entries.

"When I'm home for more than two weeks, my wife tells me to go out and work a fight somewhere, make some money," Smoger said, smiling.

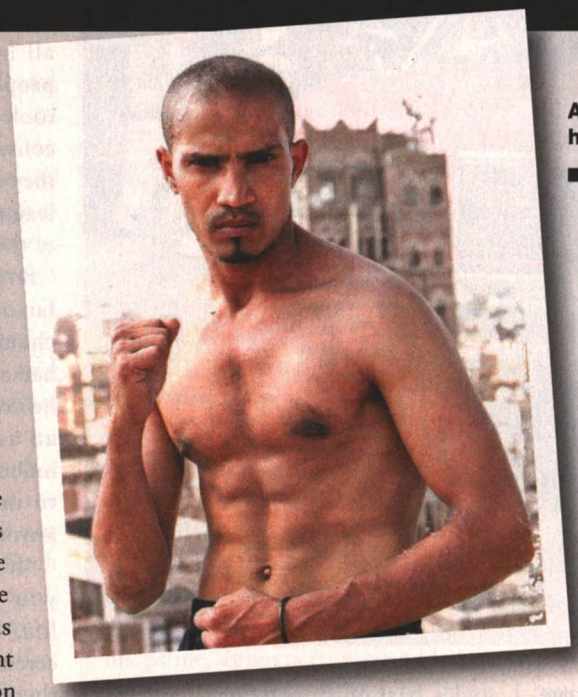
The senior member of the induction class was Mendoza, 78. He's the Mexico-based manager and booking agent for 26 world champions, including Hall of Famers Alexis Arguello, Miguel Canto, Pipino Cuevas, Humberto "Chiquita" Gonzalez and Daniel Zaragoza.

"It has been 60 years for me inside the world of boxing," he said. "Maybe I don't deserve to be here, but I'm enjoying every minute of it."

WHO WAS ALI RAYMI?

THE SUDDEN DEMISE OF THE UNBEATEN YEMENI BOXER ONLY ADDS TO HIS MYSTERY

By **Brian Harty**



Ali Raymi had the look to go with his bravado.

In 2014 a fighter named Ali Raymi was creeping up the 105-pound rankings.

He stood out for many reasons. Most obvious was his nickname: "GOD." Also he was from Yemen, a Middle Eastern country that would never be mentioned in THE RING were it not for Naseem Hamed's heritage. On social media Raymi made up for his homeland's obscurity by calling out everyone with a belt and excoriating his enemies with insults that were equal parts vulgar and poetic. He sounded like Muhammad Ali as scripted by Poseidon, at one point challenging flyweight champion Roman Gonzalez to "step into the darkest depths of my unforgiving ocean, where many mighty men met their fate or ... stay dry in the safe shores of mediocrity."

The most extraordinary thing was his record. In July 2014 Raymi was 21-0. *All* of his wins were knockouts, *all* of them were in the first round and ALL of them were against undefeated opponents. It was a terrifying picture, enough to imagine the other strawweights huddled around their campfires whispering so as not to invoke this monster's name: "He's just a legend. He's not real."

They wouldn't have been the only ones questioning reality. Raymi's record also showed that the men he beat, while undefeated on paper, were largely inexperienced locals who never fought again and Somalis who went on to careers as cannon-fodder. Raymi himself was 40 years old.

And then there were the YouTube videos. They showed Raymi against hapless opponents, relentlessly pummeling their ribs with stiff-shouldered, albatross-wide punches while his clean-shaven head bobbed free from any notion of defense.

The whole thing looked like a farce, like Yemen's entire boxing commission had been created as a front to skew the statistics and produce a contender. Maybe it was all just the plaything of a rich guy, maybe he was the son of a sultan or something.

But Yemen isn't *that* Middle East. While neighboring Saudi Arabia bathes in oil, Yemen is on the other, less Rolls Royce-y side of the peninsula. It's not a rich country at all and instead is known for its debilitating internal conflicts and its perception in the West as a haven for Al Qaeda. Its latest civil war has now become a cross-border conflagration involving allegedly Iran-backed rebels and the decapitating specter of ISIS. It has gotten so bad that in February several countries evacuated their embassies, including the United Kingdom and the United States.

And this is where the story of Ali Raymi becomes both tragic and even more mysterious.

On May 23, a Saudi airstrike targeted the Presidential Palace near Yemen's capital city of Sana'a and Raymi was among those killed in the blast. The first reports suggested he'd been a bystander but an email to THE RING from Felix J. Arno, Raymi's manager, referred to him as "Colonel Raymi" and claimed he'd been stationed inside the palace because he "was in charge of the Antiterrorism unit, in the 3rd Armored brigade of the Republican Guard." He called him "a decorated special forces officer" who at some point "had joint exercises with western forces in Djibouti."

"Western forces," including the U.S., are currently backing the Saudi airstrikes in Yemen, ostensibly to put down an insurgency by Shiite "Houthi" rebels. Who Saudi Arabia is backing is a very touchy topic of debate and has been since 9/11. It's a can the width of the Persian Gulf and inside it are worms of "Dune" proportions. There simply isn't space to open it here. But Ali Raymi was somewhere in it.

So who was he, for real? In his only readily available interview, published on fightnews.com in late 2013, Raymi stayed true to the tone of his own mythology – one of mutant strength, manifest destiny and the burden of dealing with wimps.

But there were also the signs of somebody painfully mortal. Raymi admitted to being fame-less beyond a bit of notoriety in Sana'a and was gracious toward a handful of people who had approached him with contracts (which he dismissed as bondage). He acknowledged that boxing in Yemen was "pathetic" and without opportunities for advancement. He alluded to shady politics. And he addressed the perception that he himself was a product of bribery, saying he had no money to spend: "Whatever money I make I give away immediately. Bravery and generosity go hand in hand and the opposite is true."

There is some support for this statement. Alex Manvelyan, a matchmaker who attempted to arrange fights for Raymi outside Yemen, described him as "a very kind and generous person" and offered a story. At some point after meeting Raymi in 2013, Manvelyan's email account was hacked and everyone in his contact list received a desperate message about him being beaten, robbed and stranded in Ukraine. It pleaded for money. The only person who wired any was Raymi – $200, which Manvelyan said was "big money" for Yemen. The images he sent of subsequent text exchanges with Raymi showed a concerned and very normal person.

Arno sent a photo of Raymi's young nephew, Rakan, who he said was inspired to follow his uncle's footsteps. Other photos showed a dignified, suit-clad Raymi speaking in public and meeting with a former prime minister. Arno called him "well loved by many."

Raymi appeared to be as comfortable in front of a microphone as he was in the ring.

The fightnews.com interview offered a further glimpse of realism when Raymi mentioned comparisons between himself and Edwin Valero, whose 27-0, all-knockouts career ended when he murdered his wife and committed suicide in 2010. Raymi agreed he shared Valero's proclivity for war, yes, but not his skill level. Similarly he did not claim to be in the same class as Gonzalez. And let's be honest: Gonzalez would've been a thousand-to-one favorite to beat Raymi.

But Raymi was not one to be daunted by the scribblings of mortal oddsmakers. He was apparently aware of his own limitations, he just refused to believe that they meant a damn thing. He believed in what he had. "My chin is titanium, my fists are uranium," he said. "Human wombs can't produce men capable of defeating me."

Arno's email compared Raymi's defense to that of Ricardo Mayorga – he had none, in other words. Still, Mayorga became a unified world champion. And the analogy is particularly relevant because Mayorga was able to get those opportunities in part because of being outrageous. He, too, was notorious for threatening to fornicate with his opponents' immediate relatives, as well as for his reckless, flailing punches which, when they landed, made scorecards irrelevant.

As Mayorga himself once said, "Look, I'd love to be the prettiest boxer but the only thing I know how to do is hit hard." Raymi, as Arno pointed out, also took care of himself.

If anything, Raymi just seemed profoundly frustrated by the scale of his desire and the reality of his circumstances. An inquiry sent to Roman Gonzalez's team confirmed that, yes, they'd been emailed a proposal to fight Raymi but they thought it was spam. A representative of former WBO beltholder Merlito Sabillo, to whom Raymi had supposedly proposed a $100,000 purse for a title fight in Yemen, denied knowing of such an offer. Reality is harsh.

And with Raymi it remains unsettled. A video on YouTube provides the last images of him ...

He is walking toward what would be his final fight, against undefeated Somali Omar Moxamad on March 28, 2015. The bout would take place at flyweight, 112 pounds. Raymi is wearing black shoes, black trunks, black gloves, black sunglasses and nothing else. Surrounding him is an entourage of men, mostly in casual attire, a few wearing fatigues with AK-47s slung over their shoulders. In several places, on T-shirts and hats, you can see the letters "TGE," which stands for The Greatest Ever. It's a moniker Raymi had recently adopted as a play on Floyd Mayweather Jr.'s ubiquitous "TBE" (The Best Ever) logo.

Raymi walks at the head of the open-air procession throwing a few lazy warm-up punches. He's confident as the leader. The others follow him on a dirt road, then down a stone staircase scattered with garbage. It's unclear where they are coming from, how long they have been walking or where they are going. There is hardly a sound except for footsteps and an offscreen car horn.

The scene shifts to an indoor arena where a couple hundred spectators form a backdrop to the introductions and then Ali Raymi is unleashed. He is at full speed immediately, all aggression, all body shots. Twice, the timid referee inexplicably intervenes and appears to wave off the fight, and both times he is treated as an annoyance. Both times the camera strangely cuts and then the action resumes. The overwhelmed Moxamad eventually drops and it's over in the first round. Raymi is still undefeated with 25 wins, all by knockout.

As the result is made official, Raymi falls in behind the announcer and motions offscreen. The men with T-shirts and guns return and surround the fighter, who bounces and pumps his arms in victory. Some of the apostles seem unsure how to mug for the camera but they quickly get the hang of it. Their chants have a gymnasium-like echo:

"T ... G ... E! T ... G ... E!"

U.K. FIGHTERS ON A ROLL

THESE ARE HEADY TIMES ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE POND

By **Gareth A Davies**

Boxing "boom" might be stretching the truth a little but important victories in recent times for James DeGale at 168 pounds, Jamie McDonnell at 118 and Lee Selby at 126 could be ushering in a new mini-golden age on these shores.

The last time Britain had so many elite fighters was in 2007, when the list included Joe Calzaghe and David Haye, and Ricky Hatton was still carrying tens of thousands of fans with him across the waters.

The present group might not yet be household names but this might only be the beginning. In the coming months, British boxers, including heavyweight Tyson Fury, super middleweight George Groves and middleweight Billy Joe Saunders, are expected to take part in contests at the highest level in the sport.

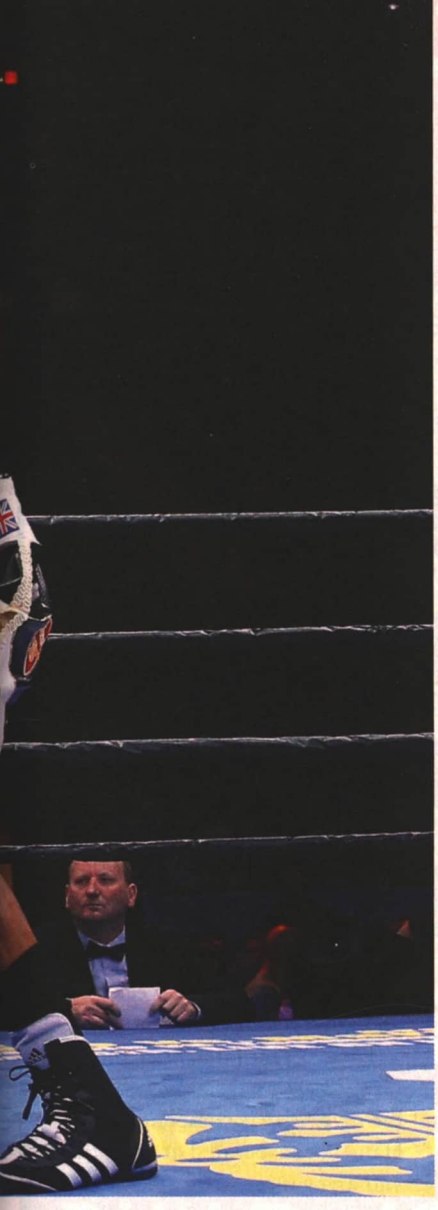
LEE SELBY

Lee Selby became the third Welshman to be crowned as a world featherweight champion (after Howard Winstone and Steve Robinson) with a technical-decision victory over Evgeny Gradovich before a sold-out crowd of 18,500 at 02 Arena in London.

Selby stole the show in an event which included victories for Kell Brook over Frankie Gavin, a facile defense of his welterweight crown, Anthony Joshua's victory over Kevin Johnson and the stoicism of Kevin Mitchell in a brutal title fight he lost to Jorge Linares.

But Selby was more magician than thief. His Russian opponent was withdrawn by the ringside physician one minute into Round 8 with a huge cut next to his right eye from an accidental head clash. Known as "The Welsh Mayweather" for his boxing skills, Selby was hailed as "The New Howard Winstone" after a majestic performance.

A statue of Winstone, the great Welsh featherweight from the '60s, stands in the square in Merthyr Tydfil just a short drive away from Barry,



James DeGale (here taking down Andre Dirrell) is only one of several U.K. boxers with important victories in recent months.

the prosaic seaside town in Wales where Selby is from.

If Selby can retain his belt for three to four defenses, given the opposition in the division – Vasyl Lomachenko, Gary Russell Jr., Nicholas Walters – the 28-year-old might see his own head up in lights on the promenade.

"A statue of me one day would be an honor. It would give the pigeons a nice place to perch," he told me, utterly self-effacing, revealing that he was, in his teens, and until the sudden death of his older brother Michael, a listless youth. The passing of his brother changed him, brought direction to his life.

"There's some beautiful places in Barry along the seafront but then there is a darker side to it. There are council housing estates (projects). I grew up on one of those. In the summertime it's really busy and it's packed. There's jobs for the youngsters and stuff.

"But in the wintertime it dies down. Growing up I didn't have a lot to do. I was just hanging around the streets and stuff, smoking weed and drinking. Like most youths. I drank a lot of cider – the cheapest two-liter bottles you could buy.

"A lot of my friends I grew up with are in prison or have been to prison. At the same time there are a lot of them that have done well for themselves. They have great jobs. They might run their own businesses or work as tradesman. But then others are signing on and taking drugs. I dread to think how my life would have panned out if I didn't box. Losing my brother shook me out of it."

Selby thought of Michael on the night he beat Gradovich and dedicated the belt to him. Now he will look ahead. In the U.K., Scott Quigg and Carl Frampton may even be scenting a move up a division. There may be challenges there.

Selby surveys the world scene. It's packed, he reckons, and replete with thrilling fights for him.

"Gary Russell Jr. just knocked out (Jhonny) Gonzalez and he probably has the fastest hands in boxing," he said. "He's a southpaw, as well. But he's only small. I have a massive size advantage over him. I think he's about 5-4 or 5-5. And he's been beat. I fancy my chances against him.

"Lomachenko … my brother boxed him as an amateur. He's probably the best amateur of this era, 300-odd fights and only lost one. Already a world champion after five pro fights. But he's been beaten by (Orlando) Salido. I think I'd beat Salido. Styles make fights. I think I'd be better off getting Lomachenko sooner rather than later. But obviously he's a great fighter and there's risk of me getting beat if I fought him now. In a few years down the line he's going to be even better. He's inexperienced as a pro.

"Walters could knock out anybody if he hits them. He punches hard with both hands. But he can be outboxed. I think I'm a much better boxer than him but he punches so hard; that's the only danger with him. The fight can end at any time with a big puncher. It's a great division, though. They're super fights down the line."

In old-school tradition, Selby's trainer, Chris Sanigar, told him of his errors rather than his successes.

"Chris told me I made a lot of mistakes and did a few things wrong," Selby said. "He didn't praise me too highly. But he was pleased. I'm his first world champion in 15 years, since Glenn Catley. I never watched him fight, to be honest.

"Chris has done really well for me. I've been with him since the first fight and he's guided my career near enough perfectly. Each fight has been a learning fight that he's picked out for me. He's had me go the old traditional route."

To add to Sanigar's delight, two weeks later, another of his proteges, Lee Haskins, won the WBA's interim

TOP 15 (as of June 14)

1. **CARL FROCH**
2. **AMIR KHAN**
3. **KELL BROOK**
4. **CARL FRAMPTON**
5. **JAMES DEGALE**
6. **LEE SELBY**
7. **TYSON FURY**
8. **SCOTT QUIGG**
9. **GEORGE GROVES**
10. **JAMIE MCDONNELL**

10-15: Martin Murray, Billy Joe Saunders, Tony Bellew, Callum Smith, Kevin Mitchell

bantamweight title belt. What a fortnight for Sanigar, one of British boxing's largely unsung heroes.

ANTHONY JOSHUA

Eddie Hearn has a problem with Joshua, namely, slowing the heavyweight down. To see and feel Joshua's size and power it's necessary to be up close to him. At 13-0, he's still a novice. And when Joshua put Kevin Johnson away in May in London, it was like Groundhog Day. Johnson was another opponent who could not show any resistance.

There was little to tell from the demolition inside two rounds. And there's the conundrum for Hearn.

"You know he's going to get a world title shot whenever he wants," Hearn said. "Every governing body is looking at Anthony Joshua and saying please fight for my title."

He added: "It's been difficult to match him from day one, but after every fight it becomes more and more difficult. After knocking Kevin Johnson out in two rounds, it becomes even more difficult. I can't see anything else happening in any other fight other than what you're seeing every single time he fights."

It will remain that way until Joshua is clocked on the chin. And he may even be a heavyweight world champion by then. Shades of Deontay Wilder here?

RICKY HATTON-KOSTYA TSZYU

The 10-year anniversary of Ricky Hatton propelling himself toward global stardom with victory over Kostya Tszyu, then the world's No. 2-ranked pound-for-pound boxer, has just passed.

In a vicious battle, the Siberian ironman quit on his stool after 11 rounds of breathtaking assaults from Hatton, who was a wide underdog on the night.

It was the moment American boxing writers dubbed Hatton as "The Manchester Mexican" for his exciting, come-forward style.

Looking back recently, "Hitman" Hatton told me: "Once you had achieved Mount Everest, you have to really try and psyche yourself up to get going again. I achieved Everest with that Tszyu fight and then it was (Carlos) Maussa for my second world title, (Luis) Collazo, (Juan) Urango and so on. You have to psyche yourself up that little bit more to get out of bed in the morning.

"I trained harder than I'd ever done and there were no corners cut. But the hunger I had before the Tszyu fight wasn't the same before the Mayweather fight. It was just different. You can't put your finger on what it is. You feel comfortable. If you feel comfortable, what do you do? You sit in your armchair and relax. I'd reached a stage of comfort. By the time of the Mayweather fight, I was Ricky Fatton.

"I'd been going up and down in weight since I was 18. My body had been through it. I had a lot of defenses of the WBU title and maybe it all took its toll. I certainly didn't feel fresh."

NASEEM HAMED

Naseem Hamed's induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame cemented his place as one of the legends of British boxing but the 41-year-old wants to complete one more unfinished journey. He wishes to return to see his old trainer, Brendan Ingle, and repair a broken relationship.

The flashy fighter broke the rules in the ring with his brilliance. He had so many tricks and ring smarts. But he also broke the rules outside it.

Hamed, of course, was a born entertainer, the son of Yemeni immigrants whose grocery store was less than 100 yards from Ingle's Wincobank gym on the same street as an industrial hillside in Sheffield.

Hamed was in that gym from the age of 7. And without that converted boys' club and the dedication of boxing Svengali Ingle, we might never have heard of the 'Prince.'

But Hamed left his mentor Ingle in an acrimonious split. It is one of the things Hamed wants to put right.

"I want to see Brendan and say sorry for the nasty things I said about him because I am so grateful for the things he did for me," said Hamed, who insists that he maintains a deep respect for the septuagenarian.

It had not always been that way. After 16 years together, late in 1997, Ingle told Hamed he was no longer prepared to work with him. Ingle revealed Hamed had belittled and insulted him in front of promoter Frank Warren and Calzaghe, saying he had achieved nothing, claimed he had been paid late and his fees reduced and as such had accused the fighter of "making money his God," which embittered their relationship.

Ingle has claimed that Hamed became "more obnoxious" as he became wealthier. Brendan Ingle told me recently: "I'd say to Naseem, 'It's no good being a good Muslim on a Friday and a bastard the rest of the week. Just as it's no good being a good Christian on a Sunday and a bastard the rest of the week.' Civility and good manners cost nothing."

Then, a year later, after the Wayne McCullough fight in October 1998, the divorce was complete as Ingle left Hamed, exasperated at his attitude and arrogance.

"The person that I wanted to be honored with me in Canastota is the first trainer I ever had and that's Brendan," Hamed said. "He should be in the Hall of Fame. He's produced so many world champions.

"I want to go and see him, put my cards on the table and say: 'Listen, I'm a father of three now, them boxing days have gone by the wayside. I'm just here to say to you, I'd love to make up with you. I want to give you a big hug and apologize for everything I said wrong to you or did. I want you to forgive me.'"

Watch this space for the reunion of the two men, the Irish pauper and the Prince. Cheers.

Gareth A Davies is boxing correspondent for The Telegraph, London.

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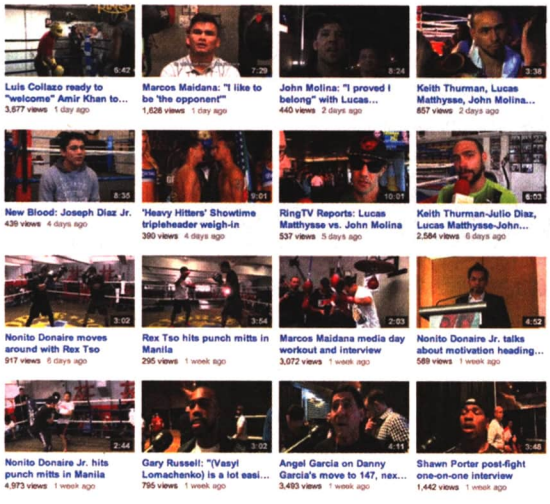

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BEST OF DOUGIE'S MAILBAG

EXCERPTS FROM THE **RINGTV.COM** EDITOR'S POPULAR COLUMN

By **Doug Fischer**

Since 2001, RingTV.com Editor Doug Fischer has held an ongoing dialog – which occasionally becomes heated debate – with boxing fans from around the world in "Dougie's Mailbag."

The following excerpts are from the June 1 and June 8, 2015, editions of the Monday Mailbag.

RAY, a Manila, Philippines, resident who emailed Fischer while on a business trip in Rome, was so impressed with Miguel Cotto's technique during THE RING middleweight champ's fourth-round stoppage of Daniel Geale in June that he is picking the Puerto Rican star to beat Canelo Alvarez. Ray asked for Fischer's opinion on Cotto's performance, the 157-pound catchweight for the fight and the anticipated Cotto-Canelo clash.

DOUGIE'S REPLY: I thought Cotto looked absolutely sensational against Geale. I do think having the Australian veteran come down to 157 pounds put some stress on his body, which clearly softened it up for Cotto's hooks and right hands. However, I don't think Geale was completely depleted. If the former titleholder had been in with a less accurate, lighter-punching foe, I think he would have gone rounds. Cotto got him out of there in four rounds because he was razor sharp.

Cotto was more relaxed, focused and pinpoint accurate with his power shots for Geale than he was for his previous two comeback victories under Freddie Roach's guidance. However, one thing Geale, Sergio Martinez and Delvin Rodriguez all had in common was that they lacked the punching power to seriously hurt Cotto. In fact, I'll go as far to say that they lacked the sufficient "pop" (or in the case of Martinez, the legs to generate power in his shots) to even earn Cotto's respect. So, of course, the veteran boxer-puncher was going to be cool, calm and collected in those fights.

That won't be the case when Cotto steps into the ring with Alvarez. When Canelo connects with his equally accurate power shots, Cotto's going to know that he's been hit and that he's in a real fight. Having said that, I won't argue with anyone who thinks Cotto can beat Canelo. Cotto appears to have equal power but his technique seems tighter and more fluid. He's also lighter on his feet than Canelo and more mobile/versatile than the young Mexican star.

It's certainly within Cotto's ability to beat Canelo. And after the manner in which he dispatched Geale, I expect Cotto's fans, proud Puerto Ricans and diehard Canelo-haters to back the four-division titleholder 100 percent going into the proposed mega-showdown. The perception of an even fight will help promote the event, which will be good for the sport, because my guess is that regardless of the outcome or how long the fight lasts, Cotto and Canelo are going to deliver action and drama.

RAI, from Staten Island, New York, is convinced that Cotto will be too much for Canelo if and when they fight. Although he says he wouldn't call Cotto a "slick" fighter, he believes the future Hall of Famer's boxing ability is "off the charts" and will be too much for the Mexican challenger. RAI also proposed two mythical matchups for Fischer: Aaron Pryor vs. Floyd Mayweather Jr. at junior middleweight and Felix Trinidad vs. Cotto at welterweight.

DOUGIE'S REPLY: I favor Canelo to beat Cotto. It won't be an easy fight for the young man. I have no doubt that Cotto will more than hold his own but I don't think he'll hold up against the Mexican's assault for 12 rounds. Cotto might go the distance but in order to do so, he'll have to go into survival mode down the stretch. I think Cotto can hurt the young challenger, even drop the bigger, stronger man, but I'm confident in Canelo's recuperative ability and

Doug Fischer thought Miguel Cotto "looked absolutely sensational against (Daniel) Geale."

his ability to stay composed during adversity. If Cotto hurts Canelo and tries to move in for the kill, I think he'll get counterpunched and rudely reminded of his age, natural size and the wear and tear on his battle-worn, 34-year-old body.

I agree that Cotto can outbox and outmaneuver Canelo – but only in spots during the fight. As you noted, the Puerto Rican star is savvy but he's not what anyone would call "slick." His face sported bruises and welts even after his brief and dominating performance against Geale. Even when Cotto is in stick-and-move mode, I think Canelo will land his share of power punches. They are both excellent combination- and body-punchers. We'll see who takes a better shot. My money is on the younger, bigger, fresher fighter.

Your mythical matchups:

Aaron Pryor vs. Floyd Mayweather Jr. at 154 pounds – Mayweather by decision. Pryor would be a handful at any weight due to his killer mentality and awkward, swarming offense, but I think his ceiling as an elite fighter was at junior welterweight (140 pounds).

Felix Trinidad vs. Miguel Cotto at 147 pounds – Trinidad chops Cotto down to a brutal late stoppage in a classic boxer-puncher (Cotto) vs. puncher-stalker (Tito) showdown. Cotto would probably score an early knockdown and might be ahead on the official scorecards at the time of the stoppage.

TIM B., from Carson, California, was not impressed with Amir Khan's performance against Chris Algieri. Although Khan won a unanimous decision, he thought Algieri made it a close and competitive contest and proved that the U.K. star has no chance of beating Floyd Mayweather Jr. and should stop calling the pound-for-pound king out.

DOUGIE'S REPLY: I don't know why folks are so down on Khan calling out Mayweather. He's 28 years old (still in his athletic prime) and he has already done everything else there is to accomplish in boxing (won an Olympic medal, won major world titles as a pro, made good money, fought in front of thousands in sold-out arenas). He wants to challenge "the man" before "the man" retires. What's wrong with that? So what if he has no chance? He shouldn't be in boxing if he doesn't believe in himself.

ANDREW, from Gateshead, U.K., believes that British boxing is on the rise and points to newly crowned world titleholders James DeGale, Kell Brook, Lee Selby, Carl Frampton and Jamie McDonnell as proof. He asked Fischer to rank each fighter in his respective division.

DOUGIE'S REPLY: How do I rate Britain's Formidable Five in their respective divisions? Well, I'm in line with THE RING's official rankings by considering Brook and Frampton to be the legit No. 1 contenders to the real champs of the welterweight and junior featherweight divisions (Mayweather and Guillermo Rigondeaux).

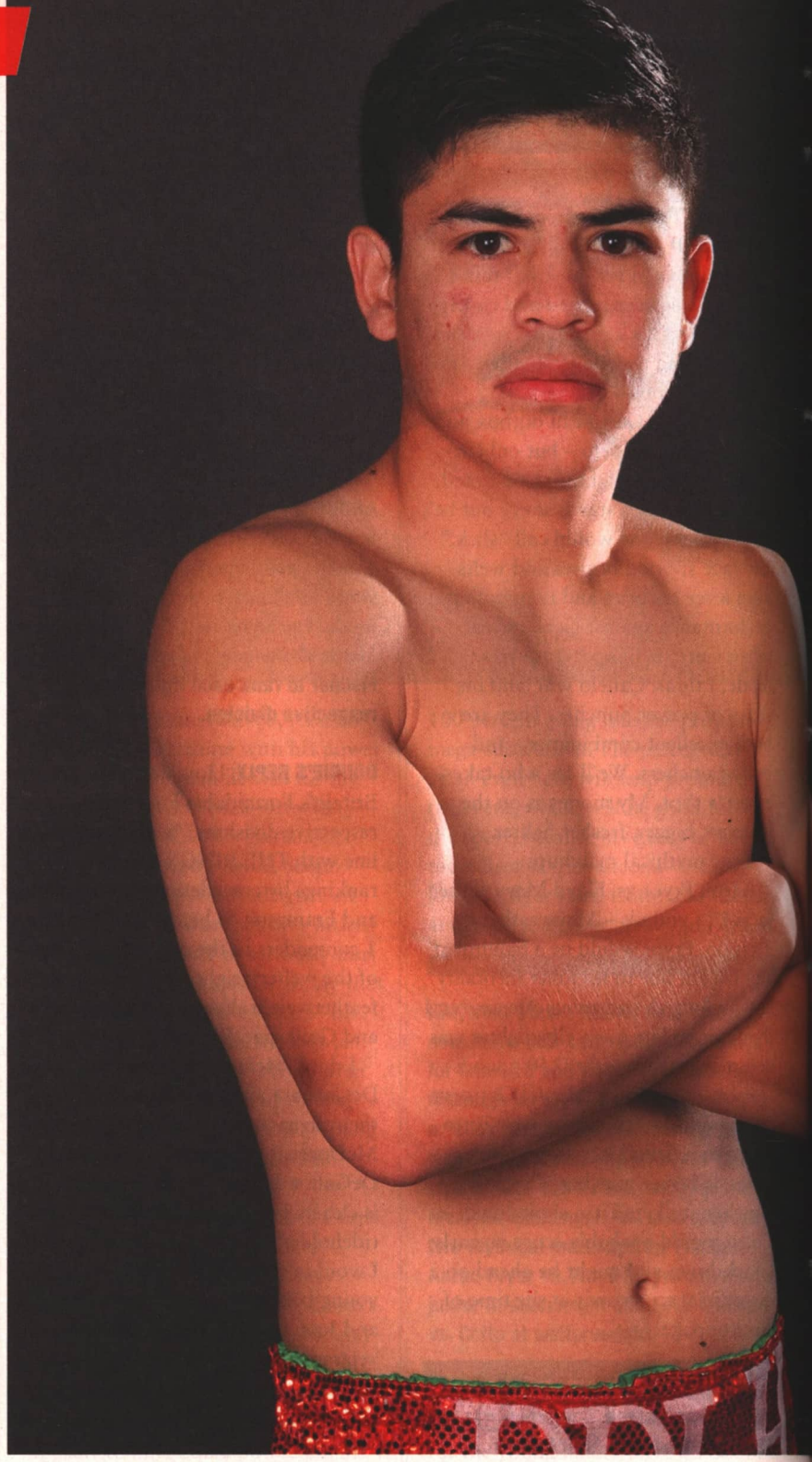
I think McDonnell, Selby and DeGale are all in the Top 5 of their divisions (and at press time, McDonnell and Selby were No. 5; DeGale was No. 2). McDonnell is clearly behind excellent WBC titleholder Shinsuke Yamanaka but I wouldn't count him out against young beltholders Randy Caballero and Juan Carlos Payano, fading veteran Anselmo Moreno or Tomoki Kameda's older brother, Koki.

I'd rate Selby behind only Nicholas Walters and Vasyl Lomachenko. I'd like the Welshman's chances against anyone else, including Gary Russell Jr. and Abner Mares. I only rate Andre Ward (whenever the former champ returns to 168 pounds) and Carl Froch (if he decides to continue fighting) above DeGale, though I still consider a matchup with domestic rival George Groves to be even money. RING

DIEGO DE LA HOYA

'GOLDEN KID' HAS MORE THAN JUST A FAMOUS LAST NAME

By **Keith Idec**



Junior featherweight Diego De La Hoya appreciates the boost provided by his cousin.

The toughest fight of Diego De La Hoya's career thus far has been the considerable battle against public perception.

The 20-year-old prospect from Mexico is well aware some fans and media immediately dismiss him because they think his career is the byproduct of nepotism. Those opinions motivate the unbeaten junior featherweight, a cousin of Oscar De La Hoya, to become known more for his accomplishments than his bloodlines.

He is promoted by Oscar's company, Golden Boy Promotions, and goes by the nickname, "Golden Kid," a play on the moniker his Hall-of-Fame relative made famous. That doesn't mean he can't fight.

"You can't get away from the name Oscar De La Hoya, with him being my promoter and my cousin," Diego De La Hoya said. "But I've proven myself by the way I fight that I really want to make a name for myself and separate myself from that. Hopefully, by working hard and producing good performances, people will appreciate what I do on my own."

The determined De La Hoya has won his first 10 pro bouts, six by knockout. Eric Gomez, who makes matches for Golden Boy, and Joel De La Hoya, Oscar's brother and Diego's manager, have displayed a willingness just two years into Diego's pro career to match him against capable, rugged opponents who'll extend him deep into fights. Joel expects Diego to become a 10-round fighter later this year.

Diego himself envisions winning a 122-pound world title within "a couple years." If that happens, the

THE ESSENTIALS
DIEGO DE LA HOYA

Age: 20

Weight class: Junior featherweight

Height: 5 feet 6 inches

Stance: Orthodox

Hometown: Mexicali, Mexico

Record: 10-0 (6 KOs)

Biggest strengths: Ambition. He's willing to do whatever's necessary to prove he is more than just Oscar De La Hoya's little cousin. ★ Ring generalship. Knows how to use movement to his advantage and usually doesn't allow opponents to set their feet before throwing punches. ★ A consistent combination puncher.

Biggest question marks: Trainer Joel Diaz is teaching him how to channel his anger in the ring. When he gets hit, he wants to hit his opponent twice. That sometimes leads to unnecessary exchanges. ★ His defense has improved since he turned pro but he still bends forward at times, which leaves him susceptible to uppercuts.

Mexicali, Mexico, native would walk a similar championship path as that of his accomplished cousin. Oscar De La Hoya was 21 when he won his first world title, the WBO junior lightweight crown, in March 1994.

Joel Diaz, Diego De La Hoya's trainer, is pleased with how well his hard-working fighter has transitioned into a more patient, cerebral boxer than he was during an 11-year amateur career that consisted of more than 250 fights.

"He doesn't want to be treated special," Diaz said. "He's willing to take the hard path, whatever he has to go through."

Working with Tim Bradley, Diaz's highest-profile fighter, also has taught Diego how much he'll have to sacrifice to reach boxing's elite level.

"I've meshed well with Joel Diaz," the young fighter said. "There are trainers out there that just want to send their guys forward, but Joel Diaz, he has made me more of a boxer-puncher. I really appreciate that."

While eager to distance himself from Oscar De La Hoya as a fighter, Diego De La Hoya also appreciates how helpful the Golden Boy brand has been early in his career. He has received more television exposure than most prospects, which has made the burdensome comparisons more tolerable.

"He's a totally different type of fighter than Oscar but he's definitely got the goods," Joel De La Hoya said. "That's why Golden Boy signed him, not just because of the name. You've seen what happens when guys go off and sign guys who are nephews and sons of former world champions. For the most part, that doesn't necessarily work out.

"But he really wants to set his own path. He really wants it and the important things about Diego are he has heart and he loves to fight. The comparison is flattering, being compared to the Golden Boy. But he does want to create his own legacy. I think he's doing a great job right now." RING

Keith Idec covers boxing for The Record, of Woodland Park, N.J. He can be reached on Twitter @Idecboxing.

3 MORE TO WATCH

DOMINIC BREAZEALE
HEAVYWEIGHT
(15-0, 14 KOS)

This former Northern Colorado quarterback and 2012 Olympian is still learning how to box. But back-to-back TKO victories over Puerto Rico's Victor Bisbal (21-3, 15 KOs) and Cuba's Yasmany Consuegra (17-1, 14 KOs) this year at least suggested the 6-foot-7, 260-pound Southern California prospect could evolve into a contender. Breazeale is 29.

JOHN THOMPSON
JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT
(17-1, 6 KOS)

The awkward, lanky Thompson, 26, made viewers take notice when the Newark, New Jersey, native knocked out Brandon Adams (17-2, 12 KOs) in the second round to win ESPN's Boxcino junior middleweight tournament on May 22. The biggest win of his four-year pro career was the third straight for Thompson since Brooklyn's Frank Galarza (17-0-2, 11 KOs) knocked him out in the second round of a January 2014 fight on Showtime.

OSCAR VALDEZ
FEATHERWEIGHT
(15-0, 14 KOS)

A two-time Olympian from Mexico, Valdez demonstrated in his last fight – a third-round knockout of veteran Jose Ramirez (25-6, 15 KOs) – that he is ready for 10-round fights against legitimate 126-pound contenders. Valdez, 24, who's promoted by Bob Arum's Top Rank Inc., should consistently entertain fans in televised bouts because he has power and loves to brawl.

HIGH HOPES

MIKAELA MAYER HAS THE ABILITY. NOW ALL SHE NEEDS IS AN OLYMPIC BERTH AND A MEDAL.

By **Thomas Gerbasi**

The rest of the world may just be catching on but suffice to say that Mikaela Mayer is a star. She has the looks, the personality and the charisma. And corporate America has already latched onto the 2016 United States Olympic team hopeful through endorsements and commercials with Dr. Pepper and American Family Insurance.

But all the outside attention means little if you can't fight. And even if you can, the difference between the true haves and have-nots in the ring usually comes down to the intangibles the special ones have.

Mayer has it all, making her not just a threat to win gold in Rio but to change her sport.

"I feel like women's boxing needs somebody to make it happen for the pro game," she said. "Ronda Rousey did it for MMA and I feel like I can be the one to do it for women's boxing."

That's a lofty goal considering what Rousey has done in the UFC, not just as a world champion

Some people believe Mikaela Mayer could revolutionize women's boxing.

but as a crossover star who was recently named the most dominating athlete in the world by Sports Illustrated. Yet Mayer, 25, is the ambitious sort. And she knows that everything begins with making the Olympic squad at 132 pounds.

"I'm very confident, and you have to be, because it's too tough of a sport," she said. "If you don't believe with every ounce of your heart and soul that you can make this team, then you might as well give up. I wouldn't be putting all this time and energy into it if I didn't absolutely believe that I could do it."

At the time this issue went to press, Mayer was a third of the way toward reaching her goal. She won the 2015 U.S. National Championship in January. The Olympic Trials are in October and then she must qualify again at the World Championships in January of 2016. If that's not a strenuous enough schedule, consider that with only three weight classes for women's boxing in Rio, she will have to get by the best of the best in more than one division at home to earn her trip to Brazil.

"Honestly, it's very hard to get out of the United States," said Mayer, who fell short of making the U.S. team in 2012. "Winning Trials is definitely going to be one of the toughest parts of getting to the Olympics. There are so many tough girls here."

Mayer has that toughness and the skill to become what many see her as: the Golden Girl of USA Boxing, an accomplishment that might've seemed out of the question when she was a teenager in Los Angeles.

"I had been kicked out of my high school [for fighting]," she said. "I tried home school for a while but I fell behind because I didn't have the discipline to do my homework on my own. Then I went to continuation school, which is that tiny school attached to the big school where all the bad kids go. (Laughs.) I just felt like I had more to offer than that."

She entered a Muay Thai kickboxing gym at 17 and took a few jiu-jitsu lessons but it was boxing that drew her in.

"I immediately became obsessed with it," Mayer said. "It was challenging, and in order to get good at it, you had to be consistent. You had to go every day, there was so much to learn and I just felt challenged. I said, 'If I keep coming back every day, I could be great at this.'"

The discipline allowed her to catch up in school and graduate on time. As she puts it: "I wanted more than just the average lifestyle so I buckled down."

Now she's two steps away from representing her country in the Olympics. And with a medal in 2016, Mayer would have some interesting choices to make, especially considering that the landscape for female pros is a lot different from that of their male counterparts.

"If I make the Olympic team, I medal and I'm making money through endorsements and sponsorships, and the Olympic committee is paying me to stay amateur, that's consistency that I may not want to give up," she said. "I can make good money going for another Olympics. On the other hand, turning pro is something that I've always wanted to tackle. If I don't do it after this Olympics, I'm not going to be boxing when I'm 40 so there's a time limit on this."

Sounds like 2016 is going to be an interesting year, not just for Mikaela Mayer but for the sport she could revolutionize.

WOMEN'S POUND FOR POUND

1. CECILIA BRAEKHUS
Norway • 27-0 (7 KOs)
Welterweight

2. JELENA MRDJENOVICH
Canada • 35-9-1 (19 KOS)
Featherweight

3. DELFINE PERSOON
Belgium • 33-1 (16 KOs)
Lightweight

4. JACKIE NAVA
Mexico • 32-4-3 (14 KOs)
Junior featherweight

5. DIANA PRAZAK
Australia • 13-3 (9 KOs)
Junior lightweight

6. JESSICA CHAVEZ
Mexico • 22-4-3 (4 KOs)
Junior flyweight

7. LAYLA MCCARTER
U.S. • 36-13-5 (8 KOs)
Lightweight

8. ERICA ANABELLA FARIAS
Argentina • 22-1 (10 KOs)
Junior welterweight

9. IBETH ZAMORA SILVA
Mexico • 23-5 (9 KOs)
Junior flyweight

10. AVA KNIGHT
U.S. • 13-2-3 (5 KOs)
Flyweight

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BY NORM FRAUENHEIM

Miguel Cotto (left) did a number on the body of Daniel Geale during their June 6 fight.

MIGUEL COTTO TKO 4 DANIEL GEALE

Date: June 6
Site: Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Division: Middleweight
Weights: Cotto 153.6 pounds, Geale 157
RING ratings (before fight): Cotto C, Geale No. 4
Network: HBO

Miguel Cotto doesn't smile much, if ever. His uncompromising eyes and the scars that surround them do most of the talking. So, too, do the body blows. In effect, they are Cotto's body language and, at their best, they don't need much interpretation. Daniel Geale never got much of a chance to read them at all.

Geale was finished before he knew what hit him but another story may have emerged as a result. The stoppage created further momentum for a Cotto showdown with Canelo Alvarez in a bout that promises to be everything Floyd Mayweather Jr.-Manny Pacquiao was not.

The looming clash doesn't need any hype, not that much remains after Mayweather-Pacquiao.

"Canelo will just be another fight," said Cotto, (40-4, 33 KOs) who kept the words, like the smiles, at a minimum.

But Cotto knows that history, his own and the rich Puerto Rican-Mexican rivalry, will sell itself in a bout that might not surpass Wilfredo Gomez's knockout of Lupe Pintor in 1982 for action. But it'll make more money. Social media and growing Puerto Rican and Mexican communities in the U.S. point to a pay-per-view blockbuster.

"It's the biggest fight to be made," Canelo promoter Oscar De La Hoya said. "It's the biggest since Pacquiao-Mayeather. The difference is you're guaranteed action."

In the immediate aftermath of Cotto's TKO of Geale (31-4, 16 KOs) at 1:28 of the fourth, there were questions about when. It looked as if Mayweather had Sept. 12 locked up. meaning a date later in the year.

There's also the question about where. Cotto has long been a favorite in New York, where his fights coincide with the Puerto Rican Day parade. He'd be the crowd favorite anywhere up and down the East Coast. Meanwhile, Canelo is loved in Texas. He drew 31,000 in Houston for his stoppage of James Kirkland. He has yet to fight in the Dallas metroplex at Cowboys Stadium. But his following in Houston and San Antonio indicates he'd have a Texas-sized crowd on his side in Dallas, too.

Las Vegas? Maybe. But that's a problematic city for Cotto, where he has suffered three of his four losses – Mayweather, Pacquiao and Antonio Margarito. Anybody up for a trip to Montreal or New Orleans?

Point is, neutrality will be hard to find anywhere in a rivalry as polarized as it is natural. The fight itself is hard to predict. There's talk that Cotto's recent run is a mirage. A year before beating Geale, he won the middleweight title with a stoppage of a hobbled Sergio Martinez. The theory is that Martinez was finished and that Geale's battle to make a catchweight of 157 pounds left him fatigued and a sluggish 182 at the opening bell. Maybe, but Cotto is nothing if not resilient. In his third fight with trainer Freddie Roach, he appears to have rediscovered the fighter who was such a force 11 years ago.

"Like the Miguel from the 2000s, 2010, you know, 2004," he said after sending Geale to the canvas twice in the fourth with knockdowns set up by body blows so familiar from his junior welterweight victories over Randall Bailey, Kelson Pinto, Lovemore Ndou and Victoriano Sosa in '04.

Call it a communication skill, a body language that Cotto has always understood better than anybody.

OMAR FIGUEROA
UD 12 **RICKY BURNS**
May 9, Hidalgo, Texas (CBS, Sky Sports)

There were questions in victory's wake for Omar Figueroa. There were answers in defeat's wake for Ricky Burns.

Winners were losers and losers were winners in a controversial, grind-it-out battle won by Figueroa (25-0-1, 18 KOs) in a unanimous decision over Burns (37-5-1, 11 KOs), who was penalized two points for holding.

Controversy over Laurence Cole's penalties in the eighth and 11th cast doubt about the 116-110, 117-109, 116-110 scores.

"I was gutted with the deductions," said Burns, whose gutsy performance helped resurrect his career, despite a 1-3-1 record over his last five bouts. "There were actually times that the ref held my arm while Omar landed body shots."

Burns returned to Scotland with plans for a fight on Aug. 1. Meanwhile, there were doubts about Figueroa, an ex-135-pound champion who failed to make weight for his first bout at 140.

NO.1 GENNADY GOLOVKIN
TKO 6 **WILLIE MONROE JR.**
May 16, Inglewood, Calif. (HBO)

The GGG beat goes on.

Gennady Gennadyevich Golovkin, the middleweight wrecking ball whose mere initials arouse fear, scored a familiar stoppage and repeated the same line about bigger challenges.

Golovkin's career is beginning to look like one long rehearsal. Willie Monroe (19-2, 6 KOs) went the way of everybody else. He was finished within six, done at 45 seconds of the round from blows that sent him staggering along the ropes and onto the canvas for a third time.

Monroe indicated to referee Jack Reiss that he didn't want more punishment from GGG (33-0, 30 KOs), who scored his 20th straight knockout.

"I do not want an easy round or an easy fight," GGG said. "I want (Miguel) Cotto or Canelo (Alvarez) now. Not in the future."

For now, however, he'll wait and hope for a future that includes the Cotto-Canelo winner.

C ROMAN GONZALEZ
TKO 2 **NO. 4 EDGAR SOSA**
May 16, Inglewood, Calif. (HBO)

The time and place were right. Only one thing was missing for Roman Gonzalez, a flyweight with heavyweight talent: He needed a rival.

It wasn't Edgar Sosa, who fell to Gonzalez in a second-round demolition at a re-done Forum where Humberto Gonzalez beat Michael Carbajal in a 1994 rematch of the only junior flyweight rivalry anybody remembers.

In his first U.S. appearance since 2012, Roman Gonzalez (43-0, 37 KOs) came as advertised. He delivered three knockdowns in the second for a TKO of Sosa (51-9, 30 KOs) at 2:37 of the round.

It was a performance that confirmed his pound-for-pound credentials. He might be the best little guy ever.

Without a rivalry and the drama that draws an audience, however, will anybody care? Japan's Naoya Inoue later in the year is a possibility. First, Gonzalez hopes for another HBO appearance, possibly in August or September.

NO. 6 JAVIER FORTUNA
UD 12 **NO. 3 BRYAN VASQUEZ**
May 29, Brooklyn, N.Y. (Spike TV)

Almost everything about Javier Fortuna is unorthodox. He leaves his hands at his side. His punches travel in every way other than a straight line. But he understands one fundamental: When it comes to stealing rounds, he's a master thief.

Fortuna (28-0-1, 20 KOs), a junior lightweight from the Dominican Republic, pocketed one round after another in a runaway decision over Bryan Vasquez (34-2. 18 KOs), of Costa Rica.

In terms of style, Vasquez is the flip side to Fortuna's left-handed finesse. He's tough. He tried to bring the fight to Fortuna and often did. Swelling around Fortuna's left eye was proof of that.

But Vasquez couldn't influence the judges. Fortuna's fast finish to nearly every round was convincing enough for them to hand over a 117-111, 116-112, 117-111 victory to a newly minted contender at 130 pounds.

NO. 3 AMIR KHAN
UD 12 **CHRIS ALGIERI**
May 29, Brooklyn, N.Y. (Spike TV)

Amir Khan, it seems, fights only for a chance to fight Floyd Mayweather Jr. It's been a political campaign. An erratic one, too.

By the time you read this, Khan should know whether he has that opportunity or has been left at the altar once more. Then again, maybe not. Khan more than anyone knows the world's richest athlete gets what he wants.

"When you wait for something this long and hope for it this long, it can set you back," Khan (31-3, 19 KOs) said after beating Chris Algieri (20-2, 8 KOs) in a victory unanimous only on the cards.

In the court of public opinion, the 117-111, 115-113, 117-111 decision was a mixed bag. Algieri didn't hurt Khan but did show that the Englishman was vulnerable to a well-timed right. That might have been enough to convince Mayweather, whose right counter is his best weapon.

NO. 5 JORGE LINARES TKO 10 NO. 7 KEVIN MITCHELL

May 30, London (Sky Sports)

Three titles at three weights are on his resume but none ever erased suspicions that Jorge Linares was a paper tiger. Only one fight, a defining moment, could do that.

It arrived and Linares responded with a pretty good answer.

Linares (39-3, 26 KOs), a lightweight champion from Venezuela, found himself on one knee and in trouble far from his home in Tokyo and hours after his wife had a baby. Kevin Mitchell (39-3, 29 KOs) put him there in front of a hostile U.K. crowd with a right in the fifth. Linares answered with resilience, flooring Mitchell in the 10th and leaving him badly bloodied for a TKO at 2:57 of the round.

Mitchell led on two scorecards at the time of the stoppage. He wants a rematch but there's an old line about what you wish for: Be careful.

NO. 8 LEE SELBY TD 8 NO. 5 EVGENY GRADOVICH

May 30, London (Sky Sports)

There's already talk in Wales that one day there might be a statue of Lee Selby next to Howard Winstone, a legendary Welsh featherweight in the 1960s, in the seaside resort of Barry Island.

"It would give the pigeons a nice place to perch," Selby said.

Selby is a man with lots of good humor and no illusions. He's not seeking statues. Instead, he wants Carl Frampton, Scott Quigg, Gary Russell Jr. or even Vasyl Lomachenko.

Those are just some of the possibilities for Selby (21-1, 8 KOs) in the wake of a technical decision over Evgeny Gradovich (19-1-1, 9 KOs). The favored Russian was trailing 79-73 on two cards and 80-72 on the third when the 126-pound fight was stopped one minute into the eighth because of a cut above Gradovich's right eye, the result of a headbutt late in the seventh.

NO. 1 KELL BROOK TKO 6 FRANKIE GAVIN

May 30, London (Sky Sports)

It's as hard to ignore Kell Brook as it is to beat him. Amir Khan has tried the former, perhaps because he knows how difficult the latter might be. Or maybe it's just Khan's single-minded business about getting a date with Floyd Mayweather Jr.

Whatever, Brook stubbornly moves forward, still unbeaten and more prominent than ever after a sixth-round stoppage of Frankie Gavin in his second bout since suffering a severe slashing wound while on vacation last September.

Brook (35-0, 24 KOs) continued to make a case for a U.K. showdown with Khan after he stopped Gavin (22-2, 13 KOs) with a right uppercut at 2:51 of the sixth round.

"We've offered them $5 million but they don't even want to talk terms," Brook promoter Eddie Hearn said. "Well, don't have it on my terms. I won't even come out. I'll sit in the dressing room. I don't care. I just want to see the fight. It would be so sweet."

NO. 1 NICHOLAS WALTERS UD 12 MIGUEL MARRIAGA

June 13, New York (HBO)

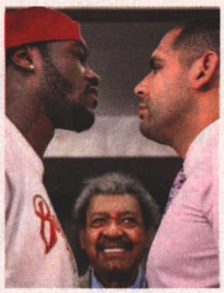
Only the scale could beat Nicholas Walters.

But that was enough.

Despite a 119-108, 118-109, 117-110 decision over onetime amateur rival Miguel Marriaga, Walters (26-0, 21 KOs) left New York a lot lighter. A failure to make weight cost him the WBA belt. It also cost him $40,000, which he had to pay Marriaga (20-1, 18 KOs) out of his purse. Moreover, it dampened hopes for a 126-pound showdown with Vasyl Lomachenko later in the year, perhaps in Dubai.

"I'm thinking about staying at featherweight," said Walters, who was 127.4 pounds in his first trip to the scale and 127.0 in his second. "But I don't know. … I still want to fight Lomachenko."

But a move to junior lightweight looks inevitable for the Jamaican, who knocked down Marriaga in the ninth yet was otherwise cautious in his first bout since a powerful stoppage of Nonito Donaire in October.



NO. 2 DEONTAY WILDER KO 9 ERIC MOLINA

June 13, Birmingham, Ala. (Showtime)

Deontay Wilder isn't the biggest talker from Alabama. Give that undisputed megaphone to Charles Barkley, whose common-sense opinions have transformed him into a bigger star than he ever was at Auburn.

But Wilder's blend of humility and confidence has an audience. It helps that he's the first U.S. heavyweight with a belt since Shannon Briggs and the only one worth watching since Evander Holyfield.

He's a new face from an unexpected place. Alabama football loses more often than boxing happens there. Wilder (34-0, 33 KOs) won. He knocked out Eric Molina (23-3, 17 KOs. But it wasn't easy.

Molina didn't play the patsy, hurting Wilder with a right in the third. Wilder awakened, scoring one knockdown in the fourth and two in the fifth before a right ended it at 63 seconds of the ninth.

COMING UP

PREDICTIONS ARE MADE BY RING STAFF MEMBERS MICHAEL ROSENTHAL, DOUG FISCHER AND BRIAN HARTY

JULY

SERGEY KOVALEV VS. NADJIB MOHAMMEDI

Date: July 25
Location: Las Vegas
Division: Light heavyweight (for Kovalev's IBF, WBA and WBO titles)
TV: HBO
Watchability rating (up to five stars): ★★★★
Also fighting: Jean Pascal vs. Yunieski Gonzalez, light heavyweights
Significance: Kovalev (27-0-1, 24 KOs) is on a roll. He easily outpointed Bernard Hopkins to unify three titles and then destroyed Jean Pascal in eight rounds in his last two fights. Mohammedi (37-3, 23 KOs) is solid but nowhere near Kovalev's level. The Frenchman is the IBF's mandatory challenger.
Prediction: Rosenthal – Kovalev KO 6; Fischer – Kovalev KO 9; Harty – Kovalev KO 4

JULY 18 – Carl Frampton vs. Alejandro Gonzalez Jr., junior featherweights (for Frampton's IBF title), El Paso, Texas (CBS). Also, Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. vs. Marcos Reyes, super middleweights (Showtime).

JULY 18 – Ik Yang vs. Cesar Cuenca, junior welterweights (for the vacant IBF title), Macau, China (UniMas, delayed). Also, Nonito Donaire vs. Anthony Settoul, junior featherweights, and Mickey Bey vs. Denis Shafilov, lightweights (for Bey's IBF title).

JULY 18 – Arthur Abraham vs. Robert Stieglitz, super middleweights (for Abraham's WBO title), Halle, Germany.

JULY 18 – Scott Quigg vs. Kiko Martinez, junior featherweights, Manchester, England (Sky Sports). Also, Darleys Perez vs. Anthony Crolla, lightweights (for Perez's WBA title).

JULY 24 – Fedor Chudinov vs. Frank Buglioni, super middleweights, London (Sky Sports)

JULY 25 – Yoan Pablo Hernandez vs. Victor Emilio Ramirez, cruiserweights (for Hernandez's RING and IBF titles), Buenos Aires, Argentina

AUGUST

DANNY GARCIA VS. PAULIE MALIGNAGGI

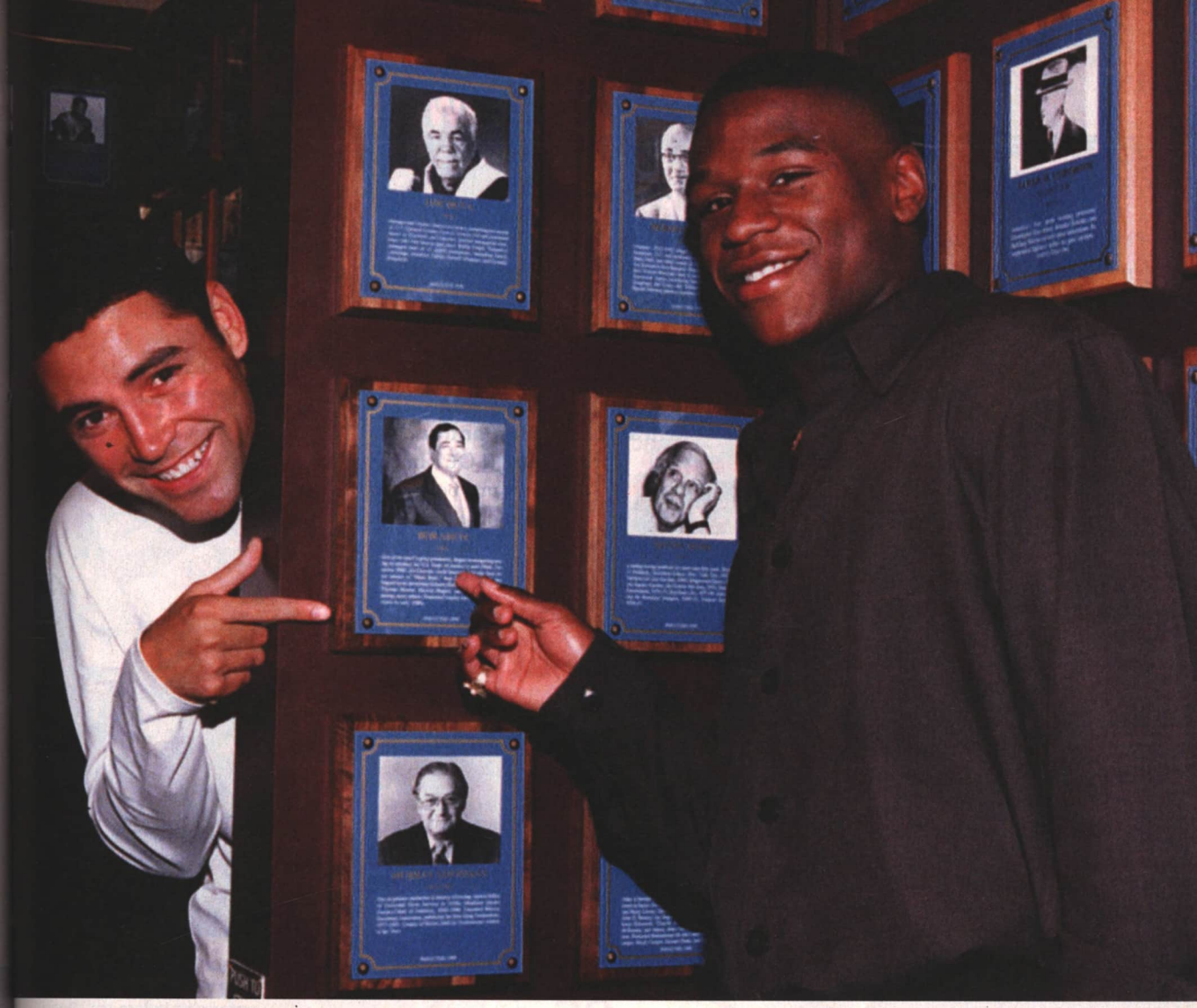
Date: Aug. 1
Location: Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Division: Welterweights
TV: ESPN
Watchability rating (up to five stars): ★★★★
Also fighting: Daniel Jacobs vs. Sergio Mora, middleweights
Significance: Garcia (30-0, 17 KOs) is coming off shaky outings in his last two meaningful fights, close wins over Mauricio Herrera and Lamont Peterson. Malignaggi (33-6, 7 KOs) will have been out of the ring for 15-plus months. Garcia holds the RING and WBA 140-pound titles.
Prediction: Rosenthal – Garcia KO 9; Fischer – Garcia KO 8; Harty – Garcia SD

AUG. 1 – Luke Campbell vs. Tommy Coyle, lightweights, Hull, England

AUG. 8 – Randy Caballero vs. TBA, bantamweights (for Caballero's IBF title), Indio, Calif. (HBO Latino).

AUG. 14 – Antonio Tarver vs. Steve Cunningham, heavyweights, Newark, N.J. (Spike TV). Also, Marco Huck vs. Krzysztof Glowacki, cruiserweights (for Huck's WBO title).

Sergey Kovalev (right) will defend his light heavyweight titles against Nadjib Mohammedi on July 25.



From The Ring Archive

HOW TIMES HAVE CHANGED

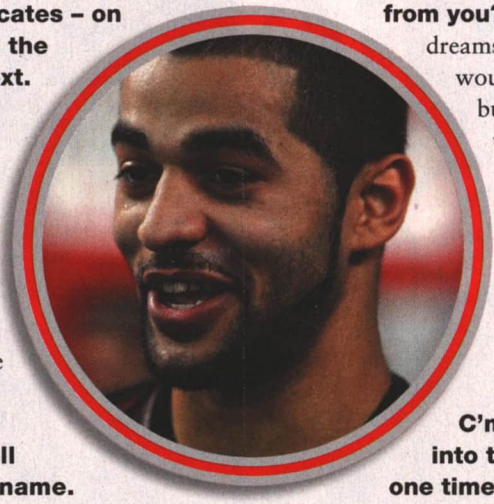
Much younger versions of **Oscar De La Hoya** (left) and **Floyd Mayweather Jr.** traveled in 1999 to the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York, in support of their then-promoter, Bob Arum, who was inducted that year. They're pointing at his plaque in the IBHOF museum. De La Hoya was the WBC welterweight champ and in his prime at the time; Mayweather was just getting started. The fighters ended up leaving Arum and promoting their own careers, which are among the greatest of modern times. De La Hoya had his own plaque installed in 2014, the year he was inducted. Mayweather will enter the Hall five-plus years after he retires.

By **Lamar Clark**

FOR BOXING AFICIONADOS ONLY

Q&A: Sadam 'World Kid' Ali

Poised to make some serious noise, Sadam Ali, the 2008 U.S. Olympian and undefeated pro (22- 0), should get his shot soon. The WBO recently announced that the winner of the bout between Tim Bradley and Jessie Vargas for the vacant 147-pound title – assuming Floyd Mayweather Jr. vacates – on June 27 must face the Brooklyn native next.



Who do you like in the Bradley-Vargas fight? I don't know. Nowadays in boxing anything can happen. I think they are both good fighters and we'll have to just wait and see.

"World Kid" Ali, tell me about the nickname. "My dad and a friend came up with the name and I liked it. It represents the world, not just Americans, not just Arabs. We are all equal. And I would like to entertain the world."

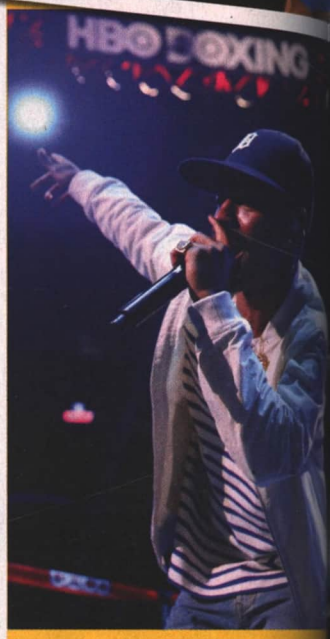
Who is your all-time favorite fighter? "My all-time favorite fighter is Prince Naseem Hamed. He's the reason why I fell in love with boxing. Also, Muhammad Ali. In today's era, I would go with Floyd Mayweather."

Given that Prince Naseem is one of your favorites, can we expect to see some extraordinary ring entrances from you? (LOL.) In my dreams maybe. ... That would be pretty nice but entrances like that don't happen anymore. Probably not. Ha! I'll try to do my best entertaining and beautiful performances in the ring.

C'mon. You can flip into the ring for us one time. "Ha! I've been doing flips for years too, just not at my fights. I keep that in the gym."

Where do you see yourself in five years? "On top, someone that's remembered, a role model, someone to look up to and world champion (of course). Five years from now, I don't want to regret anything." RING

Fight Night!



Rapper Big Sean provided some star power by performing before the Miguel Cotto-Daniel Geale fight on June 6 at Barclays Center in Brooklyn. In the photo at top, two ring card girls play to the camera – surprise! – at the Nicholas Walters-Miguel Marriaga fight at MSG.

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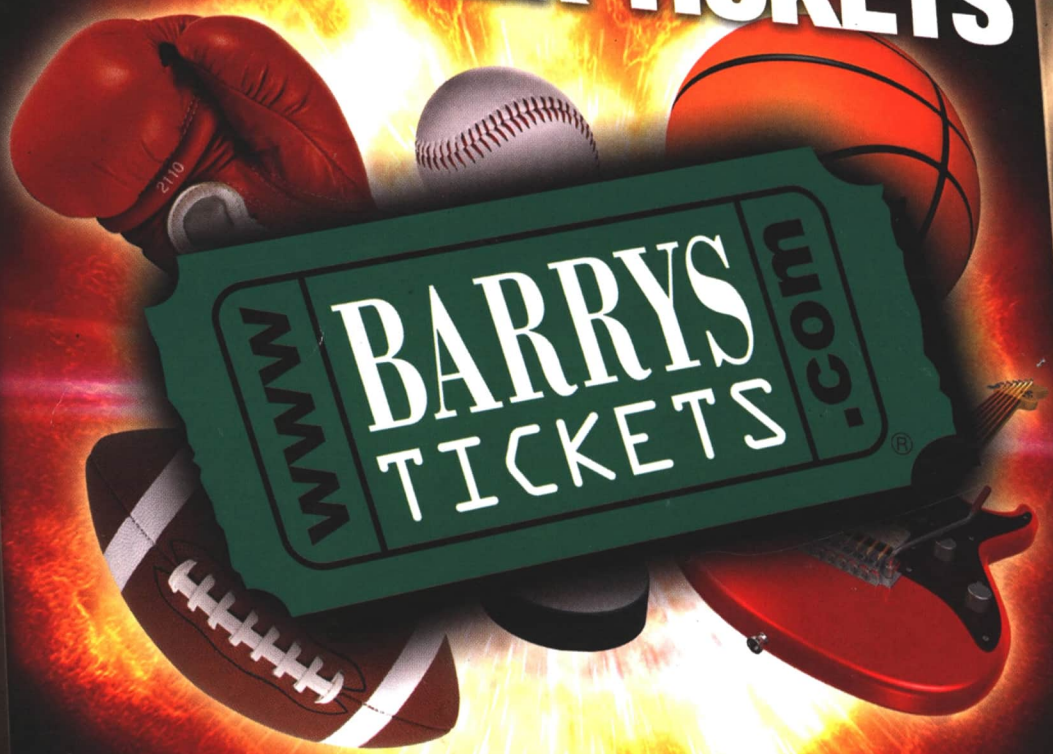

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